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2 March 2017

Mr James Clark  
Dial Park Primary School  
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Cheshire  
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Dear Mr Clark

### **Short inspection of Dial Park Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 31 January 2017, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in February 2013.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

As headteacher, you provide leadership which motivates and challenges all staff to provide the best possible learning experiences for pupils. Teachers told me that they feel empowered by your leadership to be creative in their teaching and to experiment with different ways of helping pupils to learn. Some teachers successfully provide learning in which pupils in the same class are working on different subjects at the same time. Pupils enjoy the fact that every day is different. Parents are very appreciative of your leadership. One comment, typical of many, was that you have been 'a truly positive force in this school. All the staff are fabulous'.

The leadership model you have devised is helping middle leaders to take greater responsibility for their staff teams. This ensures that leadership capacity throughout the school is strong. You and your teachers have responded well to areas for improvement at the last inspection and maintained pupils' good progress in writing and mathematics. Teachers set work which is well-matched to the needs of pupils of different abilities. Pupils in the early years make a good start to their education and the number achieving a good level of development is increasing.

You and your staff have evaluated the school's strengths and weaknesses and are tackling areas which need to improve. These include pupils' progress and

attainment in reading, and below-average attendance. You are effectively supporting the learning of disadvantaged pupils, who represent over half of the school population, but you do not always analyse precisely enough which of your strategies are the most successful.

The personal development of your pupils is at the heart of the school's work. Your curriculum, particularly the outdoor education initiative, is designed to promote pupils' independence, resilience and acceptance of responsibility. I saw that in every class pupils settle quickly down to work, with the minimum of fuss and take responsibility for the tasks they select. The training you have put in place for pupils has worked very well; it has helped pupils to build friendships and to repair relationships that go wrong. Around the school, pupils are friendly, personable and eager to talk about their learning. One pupil told me that he was amazed at how much learning could be put into one day. Pupils enjoy taking responsibility for the school's numerous pets.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You and your staff and governors put the highest priority on safeguarding the children in your care. A rigorous culture of safeguarding is in place throughout the school. All the adults who work with children are well trained and understand what risks children might face. You carefully evaluate the risks of each activity, for example when working outdoors, and make sure that staff are vigilant and that pupils know how to keep themselves safe. Pupils told me that they were confident that they could share any worries or concerns with teachers in school and know that they would receive help and support. You ensure that pupils are well taught about risky situations and how to keep safe when using the internet. Many pupils spoke to me about feeling safe and secure in school, which they see as a happy place where they are 'well looked after and learn a lot'.

You work successfully in close partnership with other agencies such as social services, the health service and the community police. Your record-keeping is meticulous and shows how thoroughly you follow up all concerns, even the most minor ones. You rigorously follow up pupil absence and work hard to reach out to and support parents who place less value on education.

### **Inspection findings**

- Published data about the school's recent performance does not do justice to the quality of the school's work because it does not take into account the very high levels of pupil mobility. In the 2016 Year 6 class, 26 of the pupils did not start their education at Dial Park and some joined as late as Year 5 and the start of Year 6. An examination of pupils' books showed that pupils settle rapidly and make good progress. Your teachers work hard to ensure that disadvantaged pupils make good progress, often from low starting points, so that differences between their outcomes and those of other pupils nationally are diminishing.
- I looked particularly closely at the teaching of reading. You have acted promptly to remedy a dip in both progress and attainment last summer that was apparent

for pupils leaving Year 6. You have focused on developing a culture of reading throughout school. Your specialist reading teacher works to good effect with individuals and groups. You have many volunteers who come into school to read with pupils. An enticing array of books is available in every classroom and in corridors with quiet little reading areas dotted around the school. Teachers have devised creative strategies such as the '24-hour reading challenge' which encourages pupils to read frequently. Pupils benefit from hearing quality reading aloud in the story time which happens at the end of every day in every class.

- Your progress information shows that the school is successfully improving pupils' skills in and enjoyment of reading. Older pupils were able to discuss their favourite books and authors with me. Pupils are developing higher-level skills such as reading for inference and successfully recounting the details of books they have read. Younger pupils effectively use their phonic knowledge to break down new words successfully. Pupils' outcomes in the Year 1 phonics check last summer were above the national average.
- Your teachers go the extra mile by visiting the homes of some pupils, to help parents understand how they can support their children's reading and wider education.
- You have a strong and committed teaching team. Staff ensure that pupils of all abilities are provided with work best suited to their needs. Workbooks, including those of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, show that pupils are making strong and rapid progress. Behaviour is extremely well managed in all classes. Pupils told me that teachers never allow learning to be spoilt by poor behaviour.
- The appointment of a teacher to focus specifically on attendance is making a difference and attendance is slowly rising, although attendance remains below the national figure. The number of pupils who are persistently absent has reduced. You take a firm stance with parents and do not grant permission for term-time holidays. You keep parents informed about attendance and other matters by weekly newsletters. At the moment, your focus is primarily on pupils with particularly low attendance. However, there is also a group of pupils whose attendance is only just below the national figure that you acknowledge need continued monitoring.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- persistent absence is tackled effectively so that more pupils attend school regularly
- the success of strategies to accelerate the learning of disadvantaged pupils is analysed more precisely so that the school knows which strategies are most effective.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools

commissioner and the director of children's services for Stockport. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Judith Straw  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection I met with you and three governors, including the chair of the governing body. I met your local authority school improvement partner who told me about the good practice which the school shares with others. I spoke with parents at the start of the school day to listen to their opinions. I also looked at the survey results from Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the results and comments from your most recent school surveys of parents' opinions. Together, you and I visited every class to observe teaching and look at pupils' work and viewed their outdoor learning. I met with a group of pupils to gather their views. I looked closely at the quality of pupils' books in writing and mathematics and reviewed the school's assessment data about pupils' progress. I listened to several pupils in Years 2 and 6 reading and talked to them about their enjoyment of books and progress in reading. I evaluated the accuracy of your self-evaluation and school development plan. I checked the effectiveness of your safeguarding arrangements and your work to ensure the regular attendance of your pupils.