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Mrs Jane Sheridan
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Sheridan

Short inspection of Rushcroft Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 15 March 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 November 2012.

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 have established a leadership team full of energy, drive and ambition to improve outcomes for pupils. You have evaluated the effectiveness of the school correctly and have clear actions for further improvement. I was able to see improvements in the quality of teaching.

You have worked effectively by developing strong links with other local primary schools. Staff are benefiting from the opportunities to share good practice. For example, staff are working together to check teachers' assessment of pupils' work to ensure that high standards are maintained. The training and development of your staff are important to you, which means that you encourage and support them to develop their skills and knowledge. You and your staff know your pupils and their families well. A number of staff told me how much they appreciate and respect your commitment to supporting the most vulnerable pupils.

The care and support for pupils are a strength of the school. The vast majority of parents spoken to during the inspection, and those who accessed Parent View online, commented very positively about the strong relationship between home and school. The phrase 'It's like a family' was heard several times. Parents appreciate the time that staff give to ensure that their children settle into school each morning. Parents also commented positively on the busy atmosphere and the range of activities, projects and clubs for pupils.

A very small number of parents mentioned the inappropriate behaviour of a small number of children in school at playtimes and in the classroom. This was not seen during the inspection. Pupils spoken to acknowledge that there are a small number of children who find it difficult to make the right choices around how to behave, both in the classroom and on the playground. However, they say that things are dealt with quickly by the adults. The pupils' lively start to the day with the energetic 'wake up dance' in assembly quickly descends into a calm environment as the pupils go off ready to learn.

Following the previous inspection in November 2012, you were given a number of areas for improvement which you have tackled effectively. You have strengthened the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school and the quality of the support given by the additional adults. All staff have received training and they are able to help pupils more effectively. Teachers quickly identify the barriers to learning and the gaps in pupils' understanding. Additional adults are deployed very effectively to support and challenge pupils, and as a result, pupils are making good progress. For example, pupils are taught phonics by very knowledgeable staff who are able to encourage and question pupils to explain their ideas. As a result, pupils are making good progress. Pupils know what to do to improve their work or if they are stuck. They enjoy the challenge, especially in mathematics. A pupil commented, 'I really like maths because I know I'm getting better at it...I got the certificate last week!'

Resources in school are used well by teachers to enhance teaching and learning. During the inspection, I saw pupils use the technology available to them confidently, to share their writing with others. Pupils supported each other to identify the strengths and weaknesses in each other's work. Pupils are proud of the progress they have made and the improvements in their presentation. They know what they need to do to improve further to earn their 'pen licence'. They are keen to be successful.

Pupils' academic outcomes in 2016 were above those of other pupils from similar starting points nationally in both reading and mathematics at the end of key stage 2. You acknowledge that there is still work to be done to improve standards in writing. You and your staff have already begun to implement strategies to rectify this relative weakness. Teachers are provided with clear guidance on how to improve pupils' outcomes for writing. The activities teachers plan match the needs of the pupils accurately. Swifter progress can already be seen in pupils' books as a result of this work. The range of opportunities for writing has been developed and there is a strong focus on pupils' interests to ignite their imaginations. For example, the children in early years are fascinated by the tadpoles in the classroom and how they are changing. There are many opportunities to write what they see.

Pupils are polite, confident and proud of their achievements. They understand that we are all different and they have respect for each other. The older pupils take their responsibilities seriously as members of the school council, sports teams and buddies for the younger pupils. Governors have a clear understanding of the priorities for the school to improve

further. New governors have been appointed following a skills review. Governors are in a strong position to drive the school forward. Governors are very supportive of you and your staff. They are committed to securing the best for the pupils, set high expectations and challenge leaders when outcomes for pupils are not as high as they should be.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Records are detailed and of high quality.

Pupils spoken to during the inspection say that they know whom to go to if they are worried or need help. A number of the older pupils spoke highly of the support they have had to help them to make the right choices with their own behaviour. Pupils said that any concerns they have are dealt with quickly by adults and they feel safe at school.

Inspection findings

- Disadvantaged pupils and the most vulnerable pupils are supported well in school. Care for pupils and their families, and the support for their learning, meet their needs well. I discussed the reasons why attendance was not good enough for some pupils. However, it is clear that the actions you are taking are robust in tackling poor attendance. A range of strategies are in place, with weekly awards, certificates and rewards for the classes with 100% attendance. The new breakfast club is well attended and provides the pupils with a positive start to the day. It is available to all children. You know your families well and support those pupils where necessary medical appointments are having a negative impact on their attendance. School is proactive in working with families to raise the importance of being in school regularly. However, there is still work to do and leaders must continue to be persistent with improvements in this area.
- You have identified the need to improve writing skills across the school, especially for the boys. Opportunities for writing are being developed to excite the pupils and capture their interests. The approach used in school encourages pupils to talk about what they want to write. This is having a positive impact on the progress in writing, especially for boys. The improved quality of phonics teaching has also had an impact on the quality of the writing that pupils produce. The sessions you delivered to help parents to be able to support their children have also had a positive impact. There is more to do to improve the quality of spelling across the school.
- You and your staff have high expectations for pupils. Staff receive regular training which has improved their skills and subject knowledge. There is a culture of support and challenge. Pupils take pride in their work and their achievements. Barriers to learning are identified swiftly and appropriate support is provided.
- New approaches to the teaching of mathematics have been introduced and monitoring shows that this is having a positive impact on outcomes. Pupils rise to the challenges set and strive to do their best. Progress for pupils across school is

improving in this subject.

- During the inspection, I read with a number of pupils. They talked enthusiastically about the class novels and the opportunities they have to read every week. A number of boys in particular enjoy reading factual books. One had chosen a book about inventions, inspired by the inventor who had been into school. Pupils read confidently and use their skills to help them when they come to unfamiliar words.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to tackle the persistent absence of a small number of pupils so that they attend school regularly.
- they report how effectively they monitor the impact of the pupil premium spending, clearly identifying the barriers to learning and the actions you are taking
- they build on the successful work on phonics with parents and carers, so that they can support their children further with their learning, especially with spellings.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Oldham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Amanda Stringer
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this short inspection, I met with you your deputy headteacher and four members of the governing body, and I was also able to speak to a representative from the local authority. I conducted a learning walk with you, and visited all classes and had the opportunity to speak to pupils and see their work. I also listened to a number of pupils read. I met with a group of pupils during the day, spoke with a number of parents at the school gates and took account of 26 free text comments. There were 33 responses to Parent View, the Ofsted online questionnaire for parents. I scrutinised your assessment information, school improvement planning, the single central record and other safeguarding procedures and practices.