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Mrs Rose Starkey
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Starkey

Short inspection of Lancaster Dallas Road Community Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 9 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 June 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. The school has a positive and friendly atmosphere. Pupils from the diverse backgrounds represented in the school get on well together and are valued equally. The pupils I talked with are proud of their school and were confident to explain why they enjoy their learning. You and other staff manage the complications of an old building with limited outdoor space well. For example, pupils move around the school sensibly and calmly at their different break and lunchtimes.

There have been a number of significant recent changes to the school. A new deputy headteacher, new leaders for English and mathematics and a new special educational needs coordinator have been appointed. These appointments have been well organised by you and governors. Senior leaders work together effectively to ensure that pupils continue to get a good deal even if unexpected long-term staff absence happens. The governing body is evolving as new members have joined. Leaders and governors seek ways to improve the resources available for pupils. For example, over the last year the library has been refurbished and a new computer room created. Plans are in place to mark out a track for pupils to complete 'a mile a day' of walking or running.

At the previous inspection, inspectors asked the school to improve how leaders monitor the progress of pupils to identify what else could be improved. You have ensured that leaders' checks on how well pupils are learning are rigorous. For example, you have a routine of observing teachers at work and of examining

particular aspects of pupils' work in their books. Your evaluation of the overall work of the school is honest and accurate and this lets you identify sensible priorities for improvement. Governors are well informed and increasingly use the information they have to challenge leaders and teachers to be as effective as possible.

The school was also asked to consider how teaching could be made even better. In response to this, you have encouraged teaching assistants to play a fuller part in pupils' learning. New teaching assistant roles have been created and training provided. You have allowed year teams to decide how their teaching assistants can best be deployed. Leaders have set up a simple but effective system of targets for pupils to reach in English and mathematics. These form part of the wall displays which are consistent in every classroom. These displays help pupils to be clear about teachers' high expectations of their learning and behaviour. The targets also contribute to teachers' good understanding of each pupil's learning and so make sure that they are providing the right challenge for pupils.

The parents who contacted Ofsted were generally very positive about the school. They very frequently highlighted that their children are happy and enjoy school, and that if issues arise, these are followed up. One parent simply described the school as 'vibrant'. A small number were less confident with some aspects of the school's work. For example, some said that communication with them could be improved. Leaders have already taken steps to ensure that communication with parents is straightforward, for example by the introduction of a new website and the use of social media.

The survey responses received from staff indicated that they are confident and highly committed to pupils. Their approach was summed up in the comment that 'the children, their progress and well-being are always central'.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors have ensured that the arrangements for safeguarding pupils are systematic and that the records about safeguarding are complete and sufficiently detailed. Staff receive regular training so that they are kept up to date with requirements. Governors are aware of their responsibilities and also receive suitable training, for example about how to make sure that there is proper emphasis on safeguarding when recruiting staff.

Pupils are taught about how to keep themselves safe in an age-appropriate way. Those I spoke with said that they felt safe.

Leaders are appropriately aware of the potential risks which the school's location could bring. There are careful procedures to make sure the site is secure when pupils are present, such as restricting vehicular access before any pupil is allowed to enter the playground.

Leaders seek ways to improve safeguarding further. Another person has recently been added to those with specific responsibility for responding to any safeguarding

matters and the availability of safeguarding information to staff has been improved with the introduction of a dedicated noticeboard in the staff room.

Inspection findings

- Leadership in the school is effective in maintaining good performance overall. You lead with conviction about the importance of each pupil and know pupils well as individuals. Senior leadership is characterised by enthusiasm and dedication. Together with your staff, you seek out ways to improve the school. Your evaluation of the school's success is honest and accurate. It leads to a well-thought-out school improvement plan which sets the direction of the school. However, this plan misses opportunities for detailed evaluation which would make it easier to identify the next steps the school should consider. In addition, the overall summaries about pupils' achievement place less emphasis on the progress of different groups of pupils than the detailed information which supports these. This makes it harder for leaders to understand if groups of pupils are doing well enough.
- Governance is a growing strength of the school. Governors understand their roles and are provided with clear information to help them fulfil them. Governors increasingly challenge leaders, for example in 'speed dating' sessions where governors have a series of conversations with different subject leaders about their impact. However, governors' discussion about the achievement of pupils over time could pay even more attention to how different groups of pupils are performing.
- Over time, pupils' outcomes have been inconsistent. In general, pupils make faster progress in reading than in writing and mathematics. Results for Year 6 in writing in 2016 were disappointing. However, leaders' careful analysis has indicated that teachers' very firm application of the new national marking standards meant that results were depressed. Leaders have ensured that additional training for teachers of Year 6 pupils has been provided. Detailed checks on how well current Year 6 pupils are doing have already been completed and the results compared with those from other schools. The school's own data indicates that these pupils are likely to achieve higher writing scores than the previous year's.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils in the school is smaller than the national average. While the data indicates that the overall progress of such pupils is somewhat slower than that of others, leaders have a detailed understanding of how these pupils' individual circumstances affect their achievement. The school's additional pupil premium funding is suitably targeted to help these pupils attend school and achieve as well as possible.
- Early years provision is a strength of the school. The early years leader is very experienced and uses her expertise to support other colleagues both in and out of the school. There is an effective balance of activities led by adults and children's learning through play. Staff adjust this balance to match the needs of children and the skills being developed. Pupils learn well in the early years as a result and the proportion of children ready to move to Year 1 is typically at or above the national average. The difference in this measure between children who

receive free school meals and those who do not is small.

- Parents of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities say that their children are very well looked after and that their needs are met. The special educational needs coordinator ensures that there is a clear system to offer tailored support to pupils. The service offered by teaching assistants has been enhanced by extending their range of specialisms, for example to include a mathematics support programme. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar progress to other pupils in the school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- sharpen the focus of evaluation documentation, including on the progress of groups of pupils, so that it is easier to check on the precise impact of improvement actions
- continue to embed recent changes to senior leadership and governance so that those involved further extend their confidence and impact.

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

Yours sincerely

David Selby
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you; the deputy headteacher; the assistant headteacher, who is also the early years leader; and the special educational needs coordinator to discuss the school's effectiveness. I discussed the school's single central record of safeguarding checks with the school business manager. I met with the chair of the governing body and, separately, a group of governors. I had a discussion with a representative of the local authority. I met with a group of pupils and talked with others during lessons.

I toured the school accompanied by you, and observed teaching and learning in classes across the school. I heard some pupils read. In addition, I paid a short visit to the school's breakfast club.

I examined documents including the school's information about safeguarding pupils, the school's self-evaluation document and the improvement plan. I considered 92

responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, together with 55 additional written responses from parents and spoke with some parents at the start of the school day. I reviewed the responses of 40 members of staff to a survey of their views conducted during the inspection.