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Mrs Anne O'Sullivan
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs O'Sullivan

Short inspection of Heyes Lane Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 28 March 2017 with Moira Atkins, Ofsted Inspector, 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 January 2013.

This school continues to be good.

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

When you were appointed in April 2015, some aspects of the school's effectiveness were not as good as when the school was inspected in 2013. The 2014 end of key stage 2 tests and assessments showed a notable improvement in writing by the end of Year 6. This was in response to the inspection's identification that outcomes in writing were weaker than in reading and mathematics. However, the improvement was not sustained into 2015. The results of the Year 6 statutory assessments undertaken in May 2015 showed a significant decline in writing. In addition, there had been a significant decline in mathematics. Pupils' progress in this subject was below average and particularly weak for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who had special educational needs and/or disabilities. The 2015 test results also showed that in reading, writing and mathematics, disadvantaged pupils' progress was generally slower than that of other pupils nationally and in the school.

You identified mathematics as the most urgent priority for improvement and the actions you instigated were very successful. Any ineffective teaching was dealt with robustly. Staff training ensured that teachers were better prepared to teach the more exacting content of the new mathematics national curriculum. The impact was clearly evident in the 2016 key stage 2 mathematics results. Despite the bar having

been raised in terms of the standard pupils were expected to reach, attainment improved to above average and all groups of pupils made at least the expected progress from their prior attainment at the end of key stage 1.

Under your leadership, the teaching of phonics has continued to improve. In 2016, a very high proportion of Year 1 pupils attained the expected standard in the phonics screening check. This included all disadvantaged pupils and all pupils who had special educational needs and/or disabilities. Highly effective teaching of phonics begins in the early years and continues into key stage 1. By the time pupils start Year 3, the vast majority have attained these skills. As such, pupils are well prepared for key stage 2 work.

The quality of early years provision has improved. Well-organised indoor and outdoor learning environments capture the children's interests so that they come happily into school keen to learn. Skilled practitioners know how to move children's learning on, including through play. Their regular assessments ensure that they are aware of the next steps in children's learning. Consequently, the children progress well across all areas of learning. Caring relationships ensure that the children feel safe and grow in confidence. They develop independence and good social skills. By the end of Reception, the proportion of children attaining the good level of development needed to be ready for work in Year 1 is above average.

You have continued to ensure that pupils benefit from a wide range of educational visits, visitors and extra-curricular activities. Comments from pupils and parents reflected their appreciation of this and the extent to which it increases pupils' understanding and enjoyment of learning. During the inspection, pupils' understanding of rainforests and the insects and reptiles that inhabit them was enhanced very well by the opportunities they were given to see, touch and handle these creatures. The programme of personal, social, health and citizenship education, including philosophy for children, which has been developed and embedded under your leadership, has ensured that pupils receive regular opportunities to debate spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues. The discussion I had with key stage 2 pupils demonstrated their mature insight into how laws and beliefs differ between countries, cultures and religions. The pupils showed respect and tolerance of these different views and beliefs.

You have ensured a resolute focus on continually improving the quality of teaching. Your deployment of staff has been carefully considered so that there is strong teaching in all key stages. This has enabled expert support to be on hand for staff who are developing their practice, including newly qualified teachers. In discussions with pupils, it was clear that they like their teachers. Pupils' appreciation of the time teachers give at breaktimes to talk and play with them came through clearly. This was also commented on by parents, a good number of whom specifically stated that the staff go 'above and beyond' their expectations.

You have built on the good quality of behaviour and personal development noted by the last inspection. The changes you introduced have ensured exceptionally calm and orderly movement of pupils around the school and more consistent use of rewards and sanctions by staff. Pupils approve of the changes and parents are overwhelmingly positive about behaviour. In discussion, pupils agreed that the system for promoting good behaviour is fair and understood by all. They explained that they are happy and proud to attend the school.

Governors continue to support and challenge the school effectively. They have an astute insight into the school's performance data and ask probing questions about pupils' achievement, including that of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong safeguarding culture at the school. Pupils say that they feel safe. One commented, 'Everyone is here to care for you', while another said, 'I never wake up in the morning and think I'm scared to go to school.' The response to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, shows that parents overwhelmingly agree that pupils are safe.

The school's checks on the suitability of staff to work with children are rigorous. You ensure that staff receive regular safeguarding training. Staff understand their responsibilities and are quick to report any concerns to the school's designated safeguarding leaders. These are taken seriously and the school's records show that they are rigorously followed up. Where the involvement of specialist services is required, there are comprehensive records of communication with these agencies.

Inspection findings

- We agreed that writing would be a key line of enquiry for this inspection. This was because the 2016 Year 6 assessments showed a fall in standards and progress from the previous year. You had already identified this as a priority for improvement. Your investigation into why achievement had fallen showed that while pupils wrote creatively and fluently, many had not met the higher spelling, punctuation and grammar expectations of the new writing assessments. This year greater emphasis has been given to teaching these technical aspects of writing, including when pupils are writing across the curriculum. Inspectors' visits to lessons and reviews of pupils' work showed that teachers are paying good attention to this aspect of writing. Your assessment information indicates that significantly more Year 6 pupils will reach the expected standard this year, including disadvantaged pupils. You are aware, however, that the improvements are still being embedded across the school.

- We agreed that the progress in reading of pupils who have special educational

needs and/or disabilities was another key line of enquiry. Pupils' weak progress in writing in the 2016 key stage 2 assessments was part of the wider school issue about writing. However, their weak progress in the reading tests was at odds with the positive progress of all other groups. You had already identified the progress of this group of pupils as an improvement priority. Leaders' review of the effectiveness of the interventions pupils had been receiving showed that these were not promoting rapid enough progress. The special educational needs coordinator and literacy leader researched various other programmes before settling on one that they believe will accelerate pupils' progress. This began in the autumn term last year. The school's in-year assessments show improvements in pupils' progress. However, the programme is still being tailored to the school's needs so it is too early to confirm its long-term impact on pupils' progress.

- The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) is well qualified and has instigated a number of improvements to the school's provision. This SENCo attends the regular pupils' progress meetings that leaders have with teachers and this adds to the information the SENCo has about pupils' achievements. However, while there is a wealth of assessment information about the achievements of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, not all is collated and evaluated by the SENCo. As such, the SENCO's view of pupils' progress is not as comprehensive as it might be. In lessons, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are included and supported well. Many parents were very complimentary about the support their children receive and the progress they have made.
- The achievement of disadvantaged pupils was another line of enquiry that we agreed. Although disadvantaged pupils have mostly made expected progress, their progress has generally been slower than that of other pupils nationally and in the school. By the time they leave the school, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils attaining the highest standards is lower than for non-disadvantaged pupils. You explained how the school is responding to a review of the provision for disadvantaged pupils, undertaken with the support of the local authority at the start of the autumn term.
- It is clear that the achievement of disadvantaged pupils is a high priority and teachers know that they are accountable for the progress of disadvantaged pupils in their class. The regular pupils' progress meetings they have with leaders always include a focus on this group of pupils. The impact of any support or intervention pupils receive is also evaluated in terms of how well it enables pupils to apply what they have learned across the curriculum.

- The sample of middle- and higher-attaining key stage 2 pupils' writing that I reviewed showed no notable differences between teachers' expectations of

disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils. Neither did it show any differences between the progress made by disadvantaged pupils and non-disadvantaged pupils. The school's in-year assessment information reflects improvements in disadvantaged pupils' progress, but this remains variable across year groups. Some of this is due to the smaller steps in progress made by disadvantaged pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. However, this does not account for all of the variability. The low attendance and high persistent absence of disadvantaged pupils over the last three years are also likely to be contributory factors.

- You and governors were aware of this issue, which you agreed as a further line of enquiry. You ensure that parents are contacted quickly if any absences are not reported: absences of three or four days are subsequently followed up. The local authority educational welfare officer is also involved in following up persistent absences. Nevertheless, the low attendance of disadvantaged pupils is not improving and persistent absence remains high. More action is needed by the school to address this matter.
- The school's pupil premium strategy provides a clear breakdown of spending. However, it does not identify the specific barriers to learning faced by disadvantaged pupils in the school. For example, there is no reference to pupils' low attendance or persistent absence and none of the initiatives or spending are allocated to improving attendance. The strategy document contains criteria to measure the impact of the pupil premium spending on pupils' academic outcomes. However, these are generally too broad and, therefore, limit the extent to which governors can fully evaluate where the funding is having the most or least impact.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- in relation to disadvantaged pupils:
 - any gaps between the progress of disadvantaged pupils and non-disadvantaged pupils nationally with similar starting points diminish
 - the most able disadvantaged pupils reach their potential
 - the attendance of disadvantaged pupils improves to at least in line with the national average for all pupils
 - the pupil premium strategy meets statutory requirements by including the barriers to learning faced by disadvantaged pupils at the school. The strategy should also evaluate more sharply the impact of the pupil premium spending on disadvantaged pupils' outcomes, including their attendance.

- in relation to pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities:

- they continue work to accelerate pupils' progress
 - they further develop the role of the SENCo so that this leader is able to synthesise, evaluate and act on the full range of assessment information the school has for this group of pupils.
- improvements in pupils' writing continue so that their progress is at least in line with pupils nationally.

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

Yours sincerely

Margot D'Arcy
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection the inspectors met with you, your deputy headteacher, two senior leaders and the school's SENCo. I held meetings with six governors, a representative from the local authority and eight pupils from key stage 2. Inspectors also spoke to pupils informally at breaktimes and during lessons, and listened to some pupils read.

Inspectors visited most classrooms, accompanied by you and your deputy headteacher. During these visits we observed learning and pupils' behaviour. Pupils' behaviour at breaktimes and as they moved around the school was observed and the school's records of behaviour over time were reviewed. A range of other documentation was analysed, including that relating to safeguarding, the school's summary of self-evaluation, assessment information, and records of leaders' checks on the quality of teaching and learning. I considered the responses of 236 parents to Parent View, including 137 written comments.