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Mrs Pam Barnes
Headteacher
Devonshire Road Primary School
Devonshire Road
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Dear Mrs Barnes

Short inspection of Devonshire Road Primary School

Following my visit on 17 May 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 since the last inspection. You, and the other leaders, ensure that Devonshire Road Primary is a caring and inclusive school where teachers work diligently to meet the needs of pupils and make learning fun. Pupils are proud of their school and say that they feel safe. Pupils speak highly of the improvements you have made, especially the developments to the outdoors and the increased range of opportunities and clubs that develop their interests and help them learn. Parents share their children's pride in the school and are overwhelmingly supportive. One parent comment typified the views of the others: 'As a parent I could not be happier with this school, and wouldn't want my daughter's primary education to take place anywhere else.'

You have a detailed understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school through your improved monitoring and evaluation, and you use this information well to prioritise actions to bring about change. As a result, you have successfully addressed the two areas for improvement identified at the last inspection.

The quality of teaching has improved. Many staff are new since the last inspection. You have selected staff carefully to meet the needs of the school. The recent appointment of an experienced deputy headteacher has strengthened further the high quality of school leadership. She has led improvements in the teaching of phonics and the early years, resulting in rapidly improving outcomes for pupils. You recognise, however, that work to enhance pupils' outcomes in phonics is not yet complete and that further actions are required to improve the consistency of staff's

correct use of letter names and the pure sounds that they represent.

Your actions to improve the quality of teaching have also increased the levels of expectation that teachers have of their pupils, including the most able and disadvantaged. This is particularly evident in mathematics and reading, where challenging activities abound. You recognise that you need to refine further the systems to allow you to closely monitor and evaluate the impact of pupil premium funding on disadvantaged pupils who are most able.

Subject leaders ensure that teachers carefully and effectively weave opportunities for pupils to develop their social, moral, spiritual and cultural understanding into all aspects of the curriculum. These opportunities include specific teaching in class and participation in many cultural events. For example, older pupils strengthen their skills through their participation in a Shakespeare festival. You and your staff strongly promote fundamental British values.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and are followed meticulously. Statutory checks are carried out on the suitability of staff to work with children. Appropriate training ensures that staff have up-to-date knowledge of safeguarding and are vigilant about the potential risks that pupils may face. Leaders keep detailed high-quality records and share information with parents and appropriate authorities, such as social services, effectively to ensure pupils' safety. Leaders follow up any concerns or complaints rigorously and appropriately follow the school's policies.

Governors have ensured that appropriate monitoring and filtering arrangements are in place for the school's internet connection.

Inspection findings

- The quality of teaching of phonics is improving rapidly. Many children begin the early years with social, communication, literacy and language skills that are below those typical for their age. Children in early years make good progress from their starting points, particularly in phonics and language skills, because of the quality of teaching they receive.
- The proportion of pupils reaching the required standard in the Year 1 phonics check shows sustained improvement and was close to the national average in 2016. The proportion of pupils achieving the required standard at the end of Year 2 in 2016 was above the national average. Teachers and teaching assistants systematically develop pupils' understanding by carefully matching activities to their abilities. Teachers make good use of the recently introduced phonics scheme to ensure the consistency of content across multiple classes. Teachers and teaching assistants make phonics fun through carefully considered use of links to other subjects such as music, where songs effectively reinforce the specific letter sounds and blends. On rare occasions, teachers sometimes confuse letter names and sounds when helping pupils or occasionally staff mispronounce letter sounds

and reinforce pupils' incorrect use of them.

- The changes you introduced to the way mathematics, reading and writing are taught has led to teachers having higher levels of expectations. Teachers plan carefully to provide appropriate enhanced challenge for the most able, including those who are also disadvantaged. Systematic teaching, including frequent opportunities for pupils to apply their knowledge and skills, develops pupils' mastery of mathematics. Teachers use links to other subjects effectively to provide appropriate opportunities for pupils to practise and enhance their writing and reading skills. For example, most-able pupils developed a script for a rebuttal speech as part of a study of democracy. Your introduction of additional challenges linked specifically to reading, such as reading awards, inspire pupils' love of books. Pupils aspire to achieve the platinum reading award or to become reading ambassadors, who help promote reading in other classes by leading group work activities. You and other leaders, including governors, closely monitor the effectiveness of the use of pupil premium funding to help pupils catch up. The well-planned and carefully monitored support activities provided by the use of pupil premium effectively promote progress. However, leaders' evaluation of the use and impact of pupil premium on the outcomes for the most-able disadvantaged pupils is more limited.
- You have improved the quality of teaching since the last inspection by ensuring that teachers are well trained and confident in their knowledge of the new curriculum and the strategies used to teach it. Teachers' effective use of questions probe pupils' understanding, encourage them to develop the reasons for their answers and allow teachers to address any misconceptions.
- You closely monitor and analyse pupils' absences from school. As a result, you are aware that a small number of girls, disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities do not attend as often as other pupils. Many of these pupils are absent for valid reasons, such as medical needs. Well-oiled systems ensure that any absences are quickly followed up to identify the reasons for them. You use a range of strategies and rewards to celebrate good attendance of individual children, families and classes. You challenge unacceptable absence through formal warning letters, attendance meetings with parents and appropriate referrals to the local authority for further action. As a result, of your concerted action, attendance has improved and was close to the national average in 2016. The number of persistent absentees is falling rapidly.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers and teaching assistants consistently use the correct names for letters and the sounds they make in the teaching of phonics
- leaders refine their monitoring and evaluation of the impact of pupil premium funding on most able disadvantaged pupils' attainment and progress.

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

published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

John Nixon
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and your senior leadership team. I met with the subject leaders for physical education and the schools special educational needs coordinator, teaching staff and governors, including the chair of the governing body. I had a telephone conversation with the local authority adviser who works with the school. I spoke with pupils during lessons and around the school and met with a group of pupils. I took account of the information contained within the responses to the online questionnaires for parents, Parent View, and staff. There were no responses to the pupils' questionnaire.

I visited classrooms to observe pupils' learning and looked at their work in books. I reviewed information about pupils' progress, attainment and attendance. I scrutinised the school's self-evaluation document, action plans and other policies. I looked at safeguarding, including evaluating the impact of the school's procedures and policies to keep children safe, recruitment checks and record-keeping.