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Mrs Amanda Dodd
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Dodd

Short inspection of Culcheth Community Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 8 June 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 December 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Indeed, as a result of your very strong leadership, the school is in an even better position than it was at the time of the last inspection. Aply supported by two very effective senior leaders, you lead the school with drive and determination. The Culcheth Primary motto, 'Where Learning is Fun', is tangible throughout the school. You have created a very caring environment in which pupils flourish. Within this nurturing community, leaders have a clear focus on pupils achieving the best possible outcomes.

Staff, parents and pupils value your unwavering commitment to the school. Staff who responded to the online questionnaire speak very highly of your leadership and feel valued. This is summed up in one member of staff's comment: 'I feel extremely proud, lucky and privileged to be able to work as part of such a strong team.'

Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. They were very keen to tell me how delighted they are with the quality of education that their children are receiving. Every parent who spoke to me said how much their children love coming to school. This view was echoed by the many parents who took the time to respond in detail online. Parents' views reflect how the nurturing environment in your school helps children to develop their confidence and make good progress.

All pupils who spoke to me were extremely positive about their school. They talk

about their learning with genuine enthusiasm. They speak highly of their teachers, whose support they value. Pupils really appreciate the wide range of enrichment opportunities that the school provides.

You strike the right balance between providing effective strategic leadership for your school and making sure that you know your pupils well in order to meet their individual needs. Although outstanding practice exists in school, you know that there are some areas where this is not yet the case. However, you are very clear about what needs to be done to remove the few inconsistencies that exist, to ensure that all pupils benefit from routinely high-quality teaching.

At the last inspection you were asked to ensure that there was sufficient challenge in writing tasks, especially for the most able pupils. There is now no doubt that developing the range and quality of pupils' writing is a very high priority for all staff. All pupils, including the most able, are routinely challenged to produce high standards in their writing.

You were also asked to provide governors with summaries of how well all groups of pupils are doing. This now happens as a matter of course, and consequently governors are well placed to challenge you on the progress of all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged.

Pupils at Culcheth Primary feel safe, valued and happy, which helps them to learn more effectively. It is therefore a shame that some pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are missing out on this experience by not attending school regularly. Alongside governors and staff in school, you are working tirelessly to improve the attendance rates of these pupils. You are aware that this remains your biggest challenge.

Safeguarding is effective.

You ensure that there is a strong culture of safeguarding in your school. All safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose, including protocols and practices for record-keeping. Systems to ensure that only suitable people are recruited to work with children in the school are secure.

You and your staff know your pupils and their families extremely well. This, coupled with the training that staff receive, means that you are all well placed to spot any signs or symptoms of potential risk or abuse. The recent appointment of a family support worker has strengthened further the work you do to safeguard your pupils.

Pupils feel that all the adults in the school look after them well and care about them. Pupils know that if they are worried about anything they can talk to any member of staff, and they are confident that adults in school will help them.

Inspection findings

- The inspection focused on a number of key lines of enquiry, the first of which related to the attendance of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Over the last three years, too many of these pupils have not been attending school regularly. You have identified the different reasons why these pupils have a high absence rate and are working closely with parents to improve their children's attendance. However, despite the extensive range of strategies that you have employed, including rewards and sanctions, the absence figure for this group of pupils remains above the national average. The absence figure at the end of this year is likely to be higher than last year, but it is important to note that a small number of these pupils have serious medical conditions. I am convinced that you will not waver in your determination to both support these pupils and do everything that you can to encourage others to attend school regularly.
- In 2016, only a very small number of pupils in key stage 1 achieved greater depth in writing and mathematics. Consequently, I was interested to find out whether teachers are providing enough challenge for pupils in Years 1 and 2. It is clear from looking at pupils' books that teachers are challenging them to produce high-quality work. The school's assessment information indicates that a higher number of current Year 2 pupils will achieve greater depth in these subjects.
- You responded swiftly to the target set at the last inspection relating to improving the teaching of writing. The work you have done in this area has had a significant impact on raising standards of writing. This is now a real strength of the school. Pupils of all ages are given many opportunities to write at length and in a range of styles. Your focus on high-quality presentation and handwriting has really paid off. The standard of pupils' best work that is on display in all classrooms is extremely impressive.
- In 2016, disadvantaged pupils in Year 6, particularly lower-ability pupils, did not make as good progress as others nationally. Assessment information of current Year 6 disadvantaged pupils indicates that they will achieve very high standards at the end of the year. This, you believe, is a result of a change of culture in school. You said: 'We have changed our mindset over the last couple of years, and pushed and pushed to raise expectations for all.' Specific strategies that have had an impact are the '8 o'clock club' and the Easter school. This change of culture is helping disadvantaged pupils to make better progress throughout the school.
- You provide governors with detailed information about how all groups of pupils are progressing. It was clear from my discussion with a small group of governors that they possess the necessary skills and expertise to use this information to challenge leaders in school. Indeed, since the last inspection, the overall effectiveness of governance has improved. The governing body is now a smaller, more focused group. Individual members of this group work more closely with leaders to provide sharper and more effective support and challenge.
- Throughout the inspection, you provided me with evidence of the outstanding practice that exists in school. However, you correctly evaluate that this is not yet

consistent in all areas. You anticipate that the standards that pupils achieve at the end of this year will be above national averages. Nevertheless, you know that this needs to be sustained, with pupils in all classes making the best possible progress. The school improvement plan outlines very clearly how you intend to become an outstanding school. Your focus now is to ensure that all staff deliver this in a consistent manner, so that all pupils benefit from routinely high-quality teaching.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- continue to take action to improve the attendance of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities
- remove the few inconsistencies that still exist in the quality of teaching by sharing best practice across the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Anne Seneviratne
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and two other senior leaders, three members of the governing body, including the chair and vice-chair, and a representative of the local authority. I met formally with two groups of pupils and talked informally with others at playtime and in lessons. I listened to pupils read. I also talked with parents informally at the start of the school day. Accompanied by you, I observed teaching and learning across the school. I examined a range of documentation, including the self-evaluation document and current assessment information. I also undertook a review of the school's website. As part of the inspection, I considered the responses to Ofsted's Parent View, responses from parents to Ofsted's free-text and responses to Ofsted's staff and pupil questionnaires.