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Mrs Susan Mayes  
Headteacher  
Moor First School  
School Lane  
Biddulph Moor  
Stoke-on-Trent  
Staffordshire  
ST8 7HR

Dear Mrs Mayes

### **Short inspection of Moor First School**

Following my visit to the school on 7 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 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. The school is a positive and inclusive learning community. Pupils enjoy school very much. They are enthusiastic and well-behaved learners. The staff value pupils' work and efforts, and motivate them to succeed and enjoy their education. The curriculum and teaching make a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development. Pupils' personal and academic development is further enhanced by a broad and interesting range of topics, visits and specially themed programmes. For example, a recent 'science day' included a visit from scientists from Keele University to showcase a range of exciting experiments that sparked pupils' enthusiasm and interest in science. The recent World Book Day focused on authors and genres, and it motivated pupils to read a broader range of books. For example, 'Dahlicious Day' for one class focused on the writings of Roald Dahl, a particular favourite of many pupils.

The parents I spoke with paid tribute to the staff for the way they make learning fun and interesting. As one group told me, 'Our children love talking about what they have done in school each day.' Pupils were very keen to talk to me about their school activities, one reflecting the views of a large group when stating, 'It's really good because our teachers make sure that we learn about lots of interesting things like the Roman invasion of Britain long ago.' Another pupil recalled the time when they studied different religions. 'Faith in Focus' was a particularly interesting topic for many pupils and included role play in mock weddings in a church and learning

about the faith of Islam by understanding the 'Five Pillars of Islam', as well as a visit to a Hindu temple in Manchester.

Work in pupils' books and assessment information show that mainly good teaching is raising standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Since the previous inspection, you and the staff team have improved the school's assessment system. You all make sure that assessments of pupils' achievement and progress are checked with other schools in your local cluster (Biddulph Schools Partnership Trust). You recognised, rightly, that pupils' early reading and writing skills have not yet reached the standards you would wish. Current assessments and last year's national test results show that you are increasing the proportion of pupils reaching the required standards in phonics by the end of Years 1 and 2. You and the staff team have adapted and refined the way you teach phonics, recognising that more pupils should be reaching the required standard.

You and the governing body provide strong and effective leadership that is continuing to improve the quality of teaching. As you know, the one area for improvement reported at the time of the school's previous inspection was to focus more on the challenge that teachers offer pupils in lessons, as well as providing opportunities for pupils to work independently and show initiative. The school has made these improvements. The most able pupils achieve well as there has been a sustained improvement in the proportion of pupils exceeding age-related standards or learning in greater depth. In addition, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress, reflecting how well you and your staff support pupils with additional learning needs. Pupils' work shows that they have ample opportunities to independently check and improve their work. The achievement of the most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, has improved significantly since the previous inspection in 2013. Pupils are also showing increased independence, for example when they self-assess their work.

Pupils' achievement in mathematics has improved markedly since the previous inspection. This improvement was reflected in pupils' work in their books and the discussion I had with a group of pupils in Year 4. The large majority of pupils achieve well in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 4. The school's development plan and subject action plans, however, do not include specific measures of success so that you can see how much progress is being made and where further improvement is needed. This makes it difficult for leaders and governors to gauge the impact of actions taken to tackle the improvements you are aiming to achieve.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Safeguarding procedures are robust and effective. Senior leaders and the governing body ensure that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and promote a vigilant and effective culture of safeguarding throughout the school. Policies and vetting procedures for staff are reviewed systematically and systems to check visitors are rigorous. Teaching, support and administrative staff are well trained and vigilant. Both governors and staff carry out regular reviews of the school's policies

and procedures. The safety, security and well-being of children in the foundation stage are managed by well-qualified and skilled early years practitioners. Effective security systems are in place and regular risk assessments are made of all on-site and off-site activities to make sure that pupils are safe and secure, both indoors and outdoors. The vast majority of parents that I spoke with and those responding by questionnaire, email or text to Ofsted's West Midlands regional office agreed that pupils are safe in school and are very well cared for by the staff.

## **Inspection findings**

- Teaching and assessment have improved well since the previous inspection. Staff and leaders accurately monitor pupils' attainment and progress. Standards are in line with the national average by the end of Year 2 and the large majority of pupils reach or exceed age-related standards by the end of Year 4. Pupils' work and progress data show that the teaching remains good.
- Assessment data for all year groups shows that current pupils are making good progress. This includes children in the early years where progress is recorded in children's learning journeys (pictorial and written records for children in the Nursery and Reception Years).
- The proportion of pupils exceeding age-related standards or achieving greater depth in their learning is increasing. Teaching is now more challenging for the most able pupils, particularly in mathematics. This is a considerable improvement since the previous inspection.
- Pupils like coming to school because of the broad and stimulating curriculum you and the other staff provide. Their enjoyment of school is also reflected in above-average attendance rates and low levels of persistent absenteeism.
- Your strong leadership has built on the successes recognised at the time of the previous inspection. Both you and the governing body have recruited staff very well and strengthened teaching.
- You and the other staff plan very effective training opportunities for teachers and support staff. It was particularly encouraging to see skilled support staff teaching small groups during phonics lessons. I could see at first hand the improvements you and the deputy headteacher have made to the teaching of phonics. This is now bearing fruit. Assessments show that the large majority of pupils are on track to reach the required standards in phonics this year.
- The school's plans lack sufficient detail about how you, other senior leaders and governors are going to measure how much improvement is being made or where more focus is needed to address weaknesses. We agreed that it would be helpful to set out more measurable criteria against the actions you include in your plans.

## **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers focus on improving the teaching of phonics further to sustain the

rise in the number of pupils reaching age-related standards by the end of Years 1 and 2

- the school's development plan and subject action plans include clear measures of success to help gauge the impact of actions on the quality of teaching and learning.

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

Yours sincerely

Charalambos Loizou  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

In addition to meeting with you and the teacher responsible for leading mathematics, I spoke with the chair of the governing body by telephone. You and I visited lessons in all four classes, which included the foundation stage class to observe the Nursery and Reception children. I spoke with a number of parents at the start of the school day to seek their views about the school. As well as results of the school's own surveys of parents' views, I considered the views of 28 parents and carers who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I also reviewed comments from 27 parents sent to Ofsted during the inspection by text or email. I spoke with teaching, clerical and ancillary staff during the inspection and reviewed the six responses from staff to Ofsted's online questionnaire. I spoke with many pupils during lessons and at breaktimes and, as you know, we looked at and discussed pupils' work in books while observing lessons.

I took account of the latest assessment of the school's effectiveness undertaken by Staffordshire local authority. I analysed the results from the most recent national tests and teachers' current assessments. My analysis focused on children's achievement in the Reception Year; phonic screening test results in Years 1 and 2; and assessments of pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Years 2 and 4. I scrutinised and discussed with you the school's self-evaluation, its development plan and subject action plans. You and I also met with a group of pupils from Year 4 to see how well they tackle mathematics problem-solving tasks and to consider their achievement in mathematics. I checked staff vetting and safeguarding procedures to determine whether the school's arrangements for safeguarding are effective.