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Mrs Lorna Robertson
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Robertson

Short inspection of Highfield Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 28 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. You and your other leaders work exceptionally well together. You are highly motivated, well organised and ambitious. All members of staff know where the school's strengths and weaknesses lie. Your self-evaluation is accurate and provides a solid basis from which to continually move the school forward. Staff morale is high. All know what the school is aiming to achieve and support senior leaders and governors in their ambitions. Staff are proud to work at Highfield Primary School, which they say, quite correctly, has sustained and extended the strengths identified at the previous inspection. Pupils enjoy coming to school and make good progress due to its caring and purposeful ethos. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school and are of the view that their children are safe and well looked after.

Governors describe you as a good leader, with skills that complement those of your senior leadership team. Your regular reports to governors provide a solid foundation for them to ask pertinent questions in relation to both your and the school's performance. You have successfully introduced a new tracking system which allows you to not only assess pupils' progress in subjects such as reading, writing and mathematics, but also capture information about pupils' interests and attitudes to learning. Your records for monitoring the quality of teaching offer good advice to teachers on how they can improve their practice. In addition, you hold teachers accountable for pupils' achievement. These practices help to ensure that pupils' progress continues to improve and provide a secure base from which to pin-point

areas for improvement.

You have successfully tackled the areas for improvement from the previous inspection. One of the things you were asked to do was to improve the rate of pupils' progress in reading and writing in key stage 1. You were also asked to improve their knowledge of letters and sounds. Highly effective teaching in the early years, notably in phonics, has raised outcomes, which have been well above average for several years. The improvement in pupils' phonics skills provides them with a solid grounding in reading and writing, which is built on very effectively in Year 1. For several years the results of the national phonics screening check at the end of Year 1 have been well above average. Similarly, since 2014, pupils' attainment at the end of key stage 1 has been at least good in reading, writing and mathematics. In 2016, the performance of the most able pupils was especially strong, particularly in reading.

Inspectors also asked leaders to review teachers' planning to ensure that enough attention is given to the most able pupils. You have acted upon this with rigour and ensured that teachers' planning accounts for the specific educational needs of the most able pupils. This is clear in pupils' workbooks. The most able are set challenging tasks in English, and their work is very expressive and demonstrates accurate grammar, punctuation and spelling. In mathematics, particularly in key stage 2, pupils routinely solve complex problems and regularly apply their good calculations skills in subjects such as science and geography. Pupils know how to improve their learning because they take note of the useful advice provided by their teachers.

Safeguarding is effective.

Together with staff and governors, you have ensured that safeguarding procedures are robust. Records are up to date, well maintained, fit for purpose and successfully implemented. Staff and governors, and your designated safeguarding leaders, are trained effectively and conversant with the most current government guidelines on keeping children safe in education. Your school has risk assessments in place to cover all eventualities. Those I examined, including one for your Nursery children's trip that took place during the inspection, were comprehensive.

Your induction arrangements for new staff are effective and help to maintain the strong sense of safety and security in the school. All staff know what to do if they have a concern about a pupil's safety or welfare. All parents who completed Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, indicated that they are happy that their children are safe and well looked after in school. Their texts and comments to me echoed this view.

You and your colleagues work effectively to ensure that most pupils' attendance is good. You recognise the need to continue to work with families, especially those of disadvantaged pupils, to improve attendance even further. Pupils have a good understanding of dangers and risks. They say that bullying is rare and always dealt with. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe when using the internet. They are

aware of various forms of prejudice-based bullying, such as racism, which they say rarely takes place in school. Pupils appreciate that they can talk to staff about concerns and have them dealt with promptly.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection, I focused on four different areas. After reviewing safeguarding, my second line of enquiry was to assess how well disadvantaged pupils perform in the school. I looked particularly at the effectiveness of the school's work to diminish the differences between disadvantaged pupils' performance and that of other pupils nationally. This was because outcomes for these pupils at the end of Year 6 in 2016 were much lower than in 2015, at which time they were good. You were disappointed with this outcome and, with the full support of governors, have taken prompt remedial action this year.
- Your senior leaders and teachers' work focuses closely on supporting disadvantaged pupils. They know exactly how these pupils perform because of your good procedures for tracking pupils' performance. Specialist training and timely interventions have helped to accelerate the progress of disadvantaged pupils across the school, as shown in your own progress data and assessment information and in disadvantaged pupils' workbooks. However, you appreciate that more work needs to be done to further diminish the difference between their progress in reading, writing and mathematics and that of other pupils nationally.
- My third focus was on the quality of teaching in key stage 2, concentrating on pupils' achievement in reading. This was because pupils' attainment and progress in this subject at the end of Year 6 in 2016 was not as good as in writing or mathematics. You immediately recognised this 'dip' and set about raising the bar to promote the importance of reading across the school. Initiatives to improve pupils' comprehension skills, such as encouraging pupils to write creatively and read poetry during National Poetry Day, have improved pupils' skills. In addition, promoting reading through your reading ambassadors' scheme and introducing reading at breakfast during World Book Day, have all helped to raise the profile of reading and improve standards.
- Pupils told me that they are especially fond of book club, where they read very challenging texts, and that their interest in reading has heightened as a result of meeting visiting authors. The most able pupils in Year 6 are avid readers who appreciate the books of many different authors.
- Finally, I investigated the effectiveness of senior leaders' work to improve the attendance of a small group of pupils. Most of these pupils are disadvantaged, and some have special educational needs. In 2016, their attendance was identified as being in the lowest 10% of all pupils nationally. You work closely with families to emphasise the importance of attendance and how this impacts on their children's achievement. In addition, your close-working relationship with different partners, including education welfare officers from the local authority, is paying dividends. The result of your arduous work has been to improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils. You are aware of the need to continue to improve the attendance of this group as well as a small core of pupils who have special educational needs.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the progress of disadvantaged pupils in reading, writing and mathematics continues to improve, making sure that differences between their performance and that of other pupils nationally continue to diminish
- strategies to improve the attendance of a small group of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs continue to be stringently implemented.

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

Lenford White
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, the designated leader for safeguarding, and the deputy headteacher, the leader of the early years provision. I also met with English and mathematics coordinators, your coordinators for special educational needs and members of the governing body. I held a meeting with your adviser from the local authority. Together with you and your deputy headteacher, I visited a Reception class and classes in key stages 1 and 2. I scrutinised pupils' workbooks and held a meeting with pupils from across the school to talk to them about behaviour and safety. I also met with pupils from Years 2 and 6 to discuss books and authors and listen to them read. I met informally with parents at the start of the school day, and considered 41 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, which included 39 comments. I took account of 21 responses to the staff survey administered at the time of the inspection, as well as the school's own surveys of parents and pupils' views. I scrutinised various documents, including a range of policies, safeguarding records, the school self-evaluation, behaviour records and information on current pupils' progress and attendance.