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Mr Doug Stitche
Acting Headteacher
Townfield Primary School
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Dear Mr Stitche

Short inspection of Townfield Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 6 July 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in December 2010.

This school is good.

Since the inspection in December 2010, your predecessor school has closed. The new school opened in October 2014. Leaders are delivering a good standard of education.

You became acting headteacher in September 2016 and initially reported to an executive headteacher. Since February 2017, the executive headteacher has supported you effectively in her part-time role as academy adviser. You have had a vision to enhance the ethos of unity in the school, using the hashtag '#WeAreTownfield' as a new motto. Pupil and staff alike are clearly aware of this, with one key stage 1 pupil even shouting it to me as I was walking around the building. The overall effect is a nurturing environment, where adults care deeply about the pupils they teach.

You analysed the published assessment information for 2016 and decided on well-focused key actions to secure improvement in areas that were weaker. Your actions, such as the improvement in reading resources, combined with good teaching have been effective, as is evident from the good progress current pupils make in English and mathematics. Your plan is thorough, but you agreed that you need to be more precise in your evaluation of the impact of your actions, clearly measuring what success will look like in terms of pupils' achievement.

Your self-evaluation document is honest and accurate. You draw on a good range of evidence that supports your judgement that the overall effectiveness of the school

is good.

I spoke with a group of Year 6 pupils during the inspection. These pupils told me they enjoy coming to school and feel that staff look after them well. They know who to turn to if they have any worries or concerns and are confident that adults will listen and respond effectively. They enjoy the variety of clubs, such as football and cross-country, and the exciting educational visits, including trips to Russia and China. They also enjoy their lessons and say that their teachers provide them with work that is suitably challenging.

I also spoke with members of staff and found that they are very positive about many aspects of working in the school. They enjoy the training you provide, including training connected with safeguarding, about which they are very knowledgeable. Staff feel that they support each other well and that you and your senior leaders are very approachable. They also told me they think you have created a culture where they feel safe to make a mistake when trying out different approaches to teaching. All of these features contribute well to the good quality of teaching in the school.

The majority of parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, were positive about the work of the school. I also saw examples of written communications from parents expressing their high satisfaction with the care and education their children receive. Typical comments included descriptions of staff as 'kind and caring' and statements such as, 'We genuinely feel they are so safe.'

Your external consultant, whom the school commissioned some time ago, has an accurate view of the strengths and areas for development of the school. He provides effective support to you in your role as acting headteacher.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. You record concerns thoroughly and you are prompt and determined in following up issues with other agencies, such as social services. The school's record of checks on staff is exemplary in its detail and complies with all requirements.

The school has a strong culture of safeguarding. Staff receive effective training which results in secure knowledge of how to recognise signs of different types of abuse. Leaders have provided each member of staff with a card containing important contact details and reminders of the school's procedures for reporting concerns. Staff have this with them in school at all times. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, for instance online, because staff regularly teach them about the risks. They also say they feel safe in school because the premises are secure.

Inspection findings

- I focused on a number of key lines of enquiry during the inspection, which I shared with you at the beginning of the day. I have covered some aspects of these previously in this letter.
- One key line of enquiry concerned the progress of pupils in key stage 1 in phonics. Since September 2016, you have revised the organisation of the teaching of phonics. You provide extra support for pupils who need to catch up. You conduct more rigorous checks on the quality of teaching and you provide coaching and support to staff who need it. Teachers adopt an approach in lessons that gives pupils opportunities to use different senses to help them learn. Teachers also ensure that pupils pronounce letter sounds correctly. As a result, pupils make good progress in phonics. Provisional assessment information from leaders indicates that a higher proportion of pupils than the national average achieved the expected standard in 2017.
- In another focus, I explored pupils' achievement at greater depth in writing. Evidence in books shows good progress in writing for the most able pupils, especially in key stage 1. In Year 1, for example, pupils write quite complex sentences for their stage of development, making plausible attempts at spelling more difficult words such as 'beautiful'. In key stage 2, there is evidence that some pupils construct sentences that engage the reader and show good control of sentence structure and punctuation. For example, in writing stories some most-able pupils write sentences such as, "What was that?" he questioned himself, horrified. He could just hear a muffled sound downstairs...footsteps?'
- Unvalidated assessment information for 2017 shows that the proportion of pupils in Year 2 who achieved greater depth in writing is above the national average. However, the equivalent information for Year 6 shows the proportion is below the national average. It was also clear from the school's own assessment information that the number of pupils reaching the expected standard or better in reading and mathematics is greater than the number in writing across key stage 2. You acknowledged that, while an increasing proportion of pupils in key stage 1 achieve greater depth in writing, there is still work to be done in improving the proportion by the end of Year 6 and in raising the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard or better so that it comes into line with reading and mathematics across key stage 2.
- My next focus was the achievement of girls in key stage 2 in reading and mathematics. You have taken effective action to bring about improvement. You more rigorously check the quality of teaching and hold teachers to account well for pupils' progress, including that of girls. You have provided new reading books and have increased opportunities for pupils to read to adults. Pupils' workbooks, including those of girls, show good progress across key stage 2 in mathematics. The school's own assessment information for Year 3, Year 4 and Year 5 pupils shows that high proportions of pupils, including girls, meet the expected standard or better for reading and mathematics. Provisional assessment information for Year 6 for 2017 shows that the percentage of pupils, including girls, achieving the expected standard or better in reading and in mathematics is above the national average.
- I also explored attendance, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who

have special educational needs and/or disabilities. You take many actions to encourage parents to make sure their children attend school. These include telephoning parents of absent pupils on the first morning of absence, arranging for your learning mentor to work with families to support them and sending home report cards every half-term, which include attendance information. You have also introduced a more rigorous approach to analysing absences by bringing forward the time after which pupils are considered absent to 9.30am. This has resulted in a slight improvement in attendance overall and a reduction in persistent absence for the groups identified above. However, you recognise that you now need to continue with your strategies to reduce absenteeism further.

- Finally, governors challenge and support senior leaders effectively. They are ambitious to provide the best-quality education for pupils at the school. They have dispensed with sub-committees and instead they all meet monthly, which they feel gives them a better overview of leaders' work. Minutes from meetings show they ask searching questions and hold leaders to account well.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they include measurable success criteria in their action plans for school improvement that precisely show how they will demonstrate that their actions have had a positive impact on pupils' achievement
- they develop writing at key stage 2, so that the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard or higher matches that of reading and mathematics, and the proportion of pupils achieving greater depth in Year 6 is closer to the national average
- they further reduce absences, especially for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, by continuing to apply their recently developed strategies.

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

Yours sincerely

Mark Quinn
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I carried out short visits to the early years and all year groups in key stage 1 and

key stage 2, which were joint activities with you. I also visited the school's unit for pupils who have a hearing impairment. I scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation summary, action plans for school improvement, records of incidents of bullying and misbehaviour, minutes of meetings of the governing body and records connected with the safeguarding of children. I held discussions and conversations with members of staff, governors and pupils. I had a discussion on the telephone with the external consultant you have commissioned. I also had a discussion with the in-house academy adviser, who is the former headteacher. I analysed pupils' work and the school's own assessment information. I evaluated 84 responses received through Parent View, Ofsted's online survey. Furthermore, I analysed 41 responses to the staff questionnaire. There were no other survey responses.