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Mrs Monica Gladman
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Gladman

Short inspection of Sutton Manor Community Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 27 September 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 October 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. There have been many positive changes since you became headteacher in 2016. Together with your leadership team, you have improved the quality of provision in early years, strengthened the teaching of early reading skills and set consistently high expectations for pupils' work across the school.

You have an accurate view of the school's effectiveness. You are passionate about the school's work but do not try to hide its weaknesses. You and your leadership team have managed a period of turbulence well. You have resolved staffing difficulties in school by restructuring the team and appointing new teachers. The school has also coped well with an unsettled period of governance. You can now look forward to rejuvenated challenge from the governing body in the next stage of the school's improvement.

Staff morale is high and they fully support the changes you have made, including the improvements to managing pupils' behaviour. You have made excellent use of the outdoor space to introduce pupils to the forest school experiences. These opportunities help to raise pupils' self-esteem and increase their motivation. You have noticed that this has had a very positive impact on developing good attitudes and improving behaviour for many pupils, including those who are disadvantaged or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. This in turn has supported pupils with their learning, building resilience and perseverance. Revisions to the

school's behaviour policy and the organisation of the school day have also contributed to the positive behaviour that is seen in school.

Sutton Manor is at the heart of a long-established community with a great tradition in the mining industry. There are many pupils whose parents and grandparents attended the school during its 100-year-old history. The school is very proud of its reputation in the local community, which has faced many challenges. Governors explained that pupils at the school contributed to the iconic Dream sculpture that sits on the site of the old colliery. Pupils learn to understand and celebrate their heritage through the rich curriculum and close links with community groups. Parents are supportive of the school and agree that there have been improvements since your arrival. As one parent explained, 'My child has always loved coming to this school, but I feel it has improved since having a new headteacher.'

At the previous inspection in 2013, weaknesses in the school's assessment procedures were identified. With the help of the deputy headteacher, changes have been made. A new pupil-tracking system was introduced to help teachers assess pupils' learning across the curriculum. Assessment at the end of key stage 1 was strengthened and is now more accurate. This helps teachers to match learning closely to pupils' ability when they start Year 3. There are key dates across the school year for assessment data to be collected and analysed. This is helping leaders to identify patterns and trends more quickly. It also highlights variations in performance between pupils, groups and subjects. If a pupil starts to fall behind, they are identified quickly and given support to help them catch up.

You were also asked to provide challenging activities so that more pupils could attain higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics. You have taken effective actions. A new leader for mathematics was appointed and he has introduced improvements to the teaching of mathematics. Staff received additional training and there are more opportunities for pupils to develop reasoning skills and apply their mathematical knowledge by solving problems. These actions have strengthened the progress that pupils make.

Standards in writing are also improving across the school and, as pupils move through key stage 2, their understanding of text structure and plot development progresses. Spelling, punctuation and grammar are taught consistently and pupils take care with the presentation of their work.

There has also been improvement in reading, although test results for Year 6 at the end of last term do not reflect this. Problems encountered by a small number of individual pupils skewed the data. You have raised the profile of reading and provided extra training for staff. Your own assessment shows that in most year groups the progress that pupils make is accelerating. Evidence I gathered agrees with your judgement. Pupils who read to me were accurate and fluent. They said that they enjoy reading and have plenty of opportunity to practise their skills. In class, teachers have high expectations of pupils' reading skills when they are challenged to explain their understanding of texts.

However, you are not complacent and know that even more can be done to bring about improvement. We agreed that priorities identified in your school's plans for development are accurate. They include continuing to improve the rate of progress made by boys in the early years and key stage 1. You know that your efforts to improve pupils' reading skills must be maintained and that even more pupils should reach the higher levels for reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2.

There were a few omissions in the information published on the school's website. The governing body should keep the website under review to ensure that it provides parents with the required information.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders ensure that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. These arrangements are understood by all staff, governors and pupils. Staff new to the school have a comprehensive induction programme to help them fully understand their roles and safeguarding responsibilities.

As safeguarding lead, you work hard to ensure that pupils' needs are met in a timely way. There are effective relationships with a wide range of agencies to give pupils the support they need. You and your team ensure that pupils are kept safe and their welfare needs are met. You are highly vigilant in relation to the care and support of vulnerable pupils.

The very caring relationships that have been established between staff and pupils mean that pupils feel safe. Pupils have confidence that adults in school will help them if they have a problem and they know it will be dealt with quickly. There have been few recorded incidents of bullying.

Inspection findings

- In this inspection, I focused my time on five different aspects. I investigated why boys' level of development is lower than girls' at the end of Reception. The new leader for early years has a very comprehensive understanding of the progress that children make because assessment procedures are accurate. Many children start school with knowledge and skills lower than expected for their age and, by the end of Reception, most make good progress. Boys continue to lag behind girls, but recent plans to increase their rate of progress are already having a positive impact. This includes early support for the high number of children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. These measures remain a priority for the school.
- The second focus for the inspection was on pupils' use of phonics. Although attainment in Year 1 in 2015 was in line with the national average, it dipped in 2014 and 2016. The introduction of regular and effective phonics teaching is paying dividends. The teaching of phonics has improved and pupils are gaining confidence in the use of their phonics knowledge. In 2017, a higher-than-average number of pupils reached the standards for their age in phonics.

- Thirdly, I wanted to find whether boys were catching up with girls as they move through key stage 1. In 2016, boys in Year 2 were behind the girls in the standards they reached for reading, writing and mathematics. You rightly recognise that the relentless drive to improve the quality of teaching and learning is beginning to make a difference. This also applies to other groups of pupils, for example disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Carefully planned measures to improve teaching are improving learning across the school. These include sharing the good and outstanding practice of some of your staff and keeping teaching under very close review. While the difference between the progress made by girls and boys has not been eradicated, it is diminishing.
- I further investigated why pupils who are disadvantaged or have special educational needs and/or disabilities are more likely to have low attendance and be persistently absent. Your detailed records show that most groups of pupils have good attendance. Systems that are in place to keep checks on the absence of individual pupils are effective. Most of the very small numbers of pupils who are persistently absent have genuine medical reasons and are well supported by the school's pastoral team. Current information shows that attendance of these groups of pupils has improved and overall attendance is broadly in line with the national average.
- Finally, at the start of the inspection the information published on the website did not meet requirements. Although some of the missing information was added by the end of the inspection, you are aware that the school's plans for the use of the pupil premium and sports grant need to be updated.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the standards that pupils reach in reading continue to improve
- the rate of progress accelerates even more for boys in early years and key stage 1
- the proportion of pupils reaching the higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics increases
- the website is compliant and is regularly checked to make sure that omissions do not recur.

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

Yours sincerely

Catherine Parkinson
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and other senior leaders, teaching staff and members of the governing body. I also spoke to the local authority adviser who works with the school. I spoke with pupils during lessons and around the school. I met with a group of pupils and heard them read. I spoke to parents at the start of the school day. I took account of the information contained in responses to the online questionnaires for pupils, parents and staff, as well as the results of the school's own recent survey of parents. 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 and action plans and looked at safeguarding, including evaluation of the impact of the school's procedures and policies to keep children safe, recruitment checks and record-keeping.