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Mrs L Minshall-Thomas  
Headteacher  
Sound and District Primary School  
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Sound  
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Dear Mrs Minshall-Thomas

### **Short inspection of Sound and District Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 8 November 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 April 2014.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. This is a warm, caring and welcoming school and the atmosphere around school is calm and purposeful. The family ethos permeates everything that you do. Adults know pupils well and make learning interesting and exciting. Your strong leadership creates a caring and supportive environment where staff and pupils thrive and challenge themselves to be the best that they can be. Staff morale is high and pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Since your appointment as headteacher, you have wasted no time in identifying the school's strengths and areas for improvement. You have a clear vision for the school, which is shared by governors and staff. Together you have put in place well-focused plans to improve the school. The governing body is knowledgeable and provides effective challenge and support to leaders. They have the best interests of the pupils and families at the heart of their work.

Pupils enjoy their time at school and wear their uniform with pride. Behaviour around the school and in lessons is good. Pupils are polite, well mannered and are a credit to the school and their families. They value the relationships they have with teachers and each other. Pupils were keen to tell me, 'We are a big family, we help each other and know each other well.'

The majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, are positive about the school. Parents value your leadership and the changes that you have made. As one parent commented, 'The new headteacher is particularly impressive. The children admire and respect her. She is a fun and strong leader.'

At the last inspection, the lead inspector asked you to improve the teaching of phonics for pupils in key stage 1. You have met this challenge. Leaders continue to review the quality of teaching and identify areas that need to improve. Teachers plan lessons carefully and pupils engage well with phonics teaching. Pupils' achievement in phonics is good. By the end of Year 1, they consistently achieve at a level which is in line with or above the national average in the phonics screening check.

The previous inspection also noted that leaders needed to improve the teaching of writing across the school. Leaders are working well to address this challenge. Your monitoring of teaching has ensured that staff improve their subject knowledge. Leaders have established a highly structured approach to writing that builds pupils' skills progressively. The teaching of writing is improving, with a consistent approach to the teaching of spelling, punctuation and grammar. Writing is now linked with topics and this has made the purpose of writing meaningful to pupils. Key texts are used to capture pupils' imagination and motivate them to write. As a result, pupils understand what it means to have a purpose to write for. They also have the skills to become successful writers. Information that leaders provided and work in pupils' books show that most pupils are now making good progress. However, you acknowledge that more needs to be done in key stage 2. This is so that standards in writing improve to match those in other subjects, especially for the most able pupils.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Leaders ensure that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Safeguarding policies are up to date and reflect the most recent changes to government legislation. All staff and governors understand their roles in keeping children safe. Records are detailed and of high quality. Suitable checks are made on visitors to the school. All staff have received relevant training and, because of this, they know what to do if they have any concerns about pupils. Leaders work effectively with external agencies to protect any pupils who might be at risk.

Pupils say that they feel safe at school and are well looked after. All pupils I spoke to agreed that bullying does not happen. Pupils know what to do if they have any concerns. They value the caring relationships that they have with staff and each other. There are many opportunities across the curriculum for pupils to learn about how to stay safe, especially when they are online. Parents who completed the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, all agree that their children are well cared for, safe and happy. As one parent commented, 'This is just a wonderful school. The safe and family-oriented feel that the school has is fantastic.'

## Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry considered how effectively leaders were improving the teaching of mathematics in key stage 1. This was because in 2016 and 2017, the proportion of pupils who attained at the expected standard was below the national average. Leaders have reviewed the teaching of mathematics and the progress that pupils make. Teachers receive training to improve their knowledge and understanding of the mathematics curriculum. Pupils are keen to learn and engage well in their work. Effective questioning and feedback by teachers support pupils' learning and enable them to make good progress in lessons. As a result of leaders' actions, pupils' progress in mathematics is improving across key stage 1, especially for the most able. Despite these improvements, you recognise that pupils need more opportunities to develop their reasoning and problem-solving skills in mathematics.
- Another key line of enquiry considered the attendance and persistent absence of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. This is because in 2016, attendance was low and persistent absence was high for these groups of pupils. You have established effective systems to check pupils' attendance and to celebrate good attendance. You have identified the different reasons why these pupils have a high absence rate and are working closely to support families. You know the reasons why every pupil is absent from school and you are working to remove the barriers that pupils face. Governors have recently reviewed the attendance policy to improve attendance across the school. Individual case studies show that as a result of your actions, the attendance of some pupils has improved. However, you recognise that there is more to be done so that all pupils attend as regularly as possible.
- The curriculum is rich. Displays around the school celebrate pupils' work and demonstrate high standards that they achieve across the curriculum. Activities inspire pupils to learn and make good progress. Leaders have created a vibrant learning environment both indoors and outside. Pupils speak with enthusiasm about the range of activities which they enjoy. Sport is a particularly important aspect within your curriculum. Pupils were keen to tell me that they value the many different opportunities they have to take part in a range of sporting competitions. As one pupil stated, 'It keeps us healthy.'

## Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to embed the strategies for problem-solving and reasoning in key stage 1
- pupils make more rapid progress in writing, so that a greater proportion achieve the highest standard in key stage 2
- they continue to improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools

commissioner and the director of children's services for Cheshire East. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Julie Kynaston  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection I met with leaders and governors to discuss safeguarding and aspects of the school's leadership and management. Together, we visited classes, spoke to pupils about their work and looked at examples of their learning. I observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and as they moved around school. I reviewed documentation about safeguarding. I spoke with pupils about safeguarding and different aspects of their work. I reviewed leaders' records of their monitoring of teaching and learning, minutes of meetings of the governing body, the school's evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses and the school development plan. I took account of the 61 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including 59 free-text responses. I completed a review of the school's website.