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Mrs Sarah Starkey
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Starkey

Short inspection of Charlestown Community Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 9 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 October 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. As headteacher, you set high expectations and you have established a team that is ambitious for your pupils, their families and the increasingly diverse community that your school serves. You reflect carefully on the decisions that you make and have accurately identified what needs to be done to improve the school further. You, your staff and members of the governing body have been proactive in bringing about the necessary changes.

At the last inspection, leaders were asked to improve the outdoor learning provision in the Nursery classes by providing suitable, good-quality resources. There is now a vibrant and exciting outdoor area for the Nursery and Reception children to explore. Staff utilise the area effectively to enhance children's learning and to create opportunities for the younger children to apply their knowledge and skills.

Leaders were also asked to ensure that teachers maintained high expectations for all groups of pupils and for teachers to work together to share good examples of teaching. You have established a culture where staff support and challenge each other. Staff appreciate the opportunity to work together with their colleagues and this has contributed to high staff morale and continued improvements in teaching.

The vast majority of parents I spoke to during the inspection spoke very positively about the care and support that you and your staff give to their children. They

appreciate the range of extra activities their children can access. Your breakfast club is very popular and parents who attend this club find it has a very caring and supportive atmosphere. 'It's like family here' was heard on several occasions. Parents with pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities were especially complimentary and they are pleased with the progress their children make. 'I see my child flourishing every day' is a typical comment from parents.

Pupils are polite, confident and happy. Pupils spoken to during the inspection said that behaviour is good most of the time. Staff support those pupils who need help to make the right decisions about how to behave. There is a strong ethos of support and encouragement throughout the school. Pupils appreciate the help teachers give them to improve their work, particularly in reading and writing. One pupil commented that they enjoy coming to school because they can tell the teachers want to teach them. Pupils strive to live up to the school motto as they 'Aspire, Learn and Achieve'.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership of the school has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements, including online filtering arrangements, are fit for purpose. Safeguarding pupils is a high priority for you and your team. There is an effective and efficient system in place to ensure that the most vulnerable pupils are identified quickly. Staff work well with other services, including the police and social care. Records are high quality and detailed. Pupils have a very clear understanding of how to keep themselves safe, particularly online.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection, I looked at the reasons for the high rates of absence for some groups of pupils. You have effective systems in place to monitor the attendance of pupils. Your team has been relentless in the drive to reduce absence and works closely with the most vulnerable families and other agencies. Imaginative incentives, including texts home to parents, have a positive impact on improving attendance. Parents and pupils understand the importance of attending school regularly. As a result, attendance and punctuality continue to improve and are now in line with the most recent national average.
- Improving attendance is having a positive impact on the progress pupils make. Parents spoken to during the inspection said, 'My child wants to come every day to get 100% attendance, so they can have tea and cake with the headteacher.' However, there are still a small number of pupils who, due to specific reasons, have considerable absences from school. This is often linked to medical needs and you share information appropriately with the medical staff supporting these pupils and their families.
- You and other leaders have accurately identified the things you need to do to improve progress in reading and writing. Staff have received training, including the opportunity to work with colleagues in school and with other schools locally. Staff apply their increased skills and knowledge to deliver high-quality teaching consistently. Work seen during the inspection shows pupils are making good

progress.

- Leaders have made changes to the teaching of reading across the school. More challenging texts now capture pupils' interests, raise aspirations and set high expectations. This has had a positive impact on enhancing pupils' use of vocabulary. For example, during a Year 5 reading session on the story 'Brother Eagle, Sister Sky' by Susan Jeffers, pupils said that by learning about the vocabulary the author uses, they have a better understanding of how to use more exciting words in their own writing. Feedback given by staff challenges pupils' learning further. Written work is improving in content and presentation. However, these improvements are not yet fully embedded.
- Training for staff has ensured consistency in the teaching of phonics across the early years and key stage 1. During regular progress meetings, leaders hold teachers to account for the progress pupils make. Any pupils who appear to be struggling are quickly identified and supported effectively. Misconceptions are corrected swiftly, and additional support is implemented when necessary. This has led to improvements in outcomes for pupils.
- Language acquisition is a key barrier to learning for a growing number of pupils. The appointment of a speech therapist has enabled identified pupils to access bespoke support in school, which is leading to improved rates of progress. Leaders work closely with parents individually and through workshops, so that they have the skills to support their children at home. These sessions are very popular and parents appreciate the support they receive from staff.
- A high proportion of children typically enter Nursery at a stage of development below that which is typical of children of a similar age. Leaders have established close links with other local agencies and providers as part of a programme supporting parents to ensure that their children are ready for school. This has ensured a smooth start to school life and children quickly settle into well-established routines. Children develop independence and cooperation skills in a safe and familiar environment.
- Children in Reception are becoming more fluent orally, and with their written work. For example, in one of the Reception classes, children were being supported in using their phonic skills to write about the owl who was afraid of the dark. A group of boys were discussing words to describe the items on the autumn display, 'Wow, feel this one, it's really spiky!' Leaders closely monitor the progress children make and as a result act swiftly to address misconceptions and provide additional support when necessary. The school's own assessment information, and inspection evidence, shows that an increasing proportion of children make strong progress from their starting points. However, not enough children reach a good level of development so that they are ready for the next stage of their education.
- You and your leaders, including governors, accurately identify the barriers to learning for the increasingly high proportion of disadvantaged pupils. The actions you take provide practical support for the most vulnerable families. This contributes to strong gains in learning and good progress for disadvantaged pupils. Governors monitor the impact of the actions you have implemented. They have an accurate understanding of the strengths and areas for further

improvement.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- they build upon the actions taken in the early years and increase the proportion of children who reach a good level of development by the end of Reception
- they embed the changes made to the teaching of reading and writing so that progress rates accelerate further, and a higher proportion of pupils reach and exceed the standard expected for their age.

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

Yours sincerely

Amanda Stringer
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you and other members of staff. I also met with the chair of governors and four members of the governing body. I conducted a learning walk with you and visited classes where I had the opportunity to speak to pupils and see their work. I heard a number of pupils read. I met with a group of pupils during the day and spoke with a number of parents who attended the 'Breakfast Club' and at the school gates. I also took account of the free-text comments and 20 responses to Parent View, the Ofsted online questionnaire for parents. I scrutinised your assessment information, your self-evaluation, school improvement planning, the single central record and other safeguarding procedures and practices.