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Gill Holmes
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Dear Mrs Holmes

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Lum Head Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 14 November 2017, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in October 2016. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection in order to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- ensure that teachers across the school share the same high expectations and ambition for pupils evident in classes where rates of progress are strongest.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you and other senior leaders, three members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. You accompanied me on a series of short visits to classes, and I also looked at work in pupils' books and the school's assessment information. I spoke informally with pupils throughout the day, including hearing groups of pupils read. I spoke with one parent and reviewed the

outcomes of a parental survey conducted by the school. I also evaluated the school's improvement plans and scrutinised other key documentation.

Context

You took up your post in September 2016, shortly before the school's most recent inspection. The deputy headteacher joined the school in January 2017. At the time of the inspection two teachers were absent on maternity leave.

Main findings

Your energetic and well-focused leadership has provided the school with the direction that it urgently required. You, along with other senior leaders and governors, have an accurate view of the school's current strengths and weaknesses and your highly detailed school improvement planning maps a clear way ahead. You have galvanised support for the school from both staff and parents. Your actions so far have ensured that the school has turned a corner and is moving forward strongly.

The quality of leadership at different levels has been a key factor in the school's journey of improvement. You, the deputy headteacher and the assistant headteacher form a strong senior leadership team. It is also clear that the work of the leaders responsible for English and mathematics is having a positive impact on standards in those areas. Governors, led successfully by two experienced and knowledgeable co-chairs, provide an appropriate and effective balance of support and challenge for school leaders. Effective leadership is ensuring that the quality of teaching across the school is improving, although there are some remaining inconsistencies in the level of teachers' expectations and ambitions in different classes.

One area for improvement identified in the previous inspection report focused on the achievement of the most able pupils in the school. Positive steps have been made in this area. Results of the key stage 2 assessments in 2017 showed that the proportion of pupils reaching the higher standard by the end of Year 6 has increased in reading, writing and mathematics. This improvement is most notable in pupils' writing, where there had been no pupils working at the higher level the previous year. Evidence in pupils' written work, particularly for pupils currently in Years 5 and 6, confirms that this improvement is continuing and the proportion of current pupils working at the higher levels is rising.

The picture in key stage 1 is similarly positive, with the proportion of pupils working at greater depth being typically at least in line with the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils' books confirm that teachers challenge the most able pupils effectively in most classes, and this is having a positive impact on these pupils' progress. However, you acknowledge that there are occasions when teachers miss the chance to accelerate further the progress of the most able pupils. On these

occasions, teachers ask pupils to complete large numbers of similar examples when it is clear from pupils' responses that they are capable of tackling more challenging work sooner.

My visit also looked at whether the teaching of phonics and reading had improved since the last inspection. It is clear from pupils' confidence in using phonics to help with their reading, as well as in the above-average outcomes in the Year 1 phonics screening check in 2017, that pupils' achievement in phonics is improving strongly. You have ensured that staff have received appropriate training that has improved their subject knowledge, and as a result staff now model phonics accurately and move pupils' learning on at a good pace.

Your actions have ensured that reading has a much higher profile in school. Pupils whom I talked to spoke enthusiastically about reading, telling me about their favourite authors and types of books. The most able readers from Year 6 read challenging texts, such as 'Treasure Island', and confidently discuss plot and characters, and differences in modern and archaic language. The school library has been refurbished and provides pupils with a wide range of books to enjoy in an attractive and well-organised environment.

The leader for English has introduced a clear whole-school strategy for improving the teaching of reading. Inspection evidence confirmed that teachers have good subject knowledge and use questioning skilfully to test and develop pupils' vocabulary and comprehension skills. This is having a positive impact on pupils' reading, as was evident in the skills and confidence of the groups of pupils I heard read. However, while improvements have been made, you agree that activities that pupils complete independently during reading sessions have less consistently clear impact on their progress. You are planning to evaluate further the teaching of reading to ensure that it has the maximum effect.

Leadership of provision for disadvantaged pupils, which was identified as an area for improvement in the last inspection, is also now stronger. The school commissioned a review of the spending of pupil premium funding and has followed up any suggestions that were made. Leaders have conducted a detailed analysis of the achievement of disadvantaged pupils, identifying other factors that have an impact on their learning. Strong pastoral care is helping to ensure that more of these pupils are ready to learn. Leaders also carefully evaluate how effective different intervention activities have been in improving outcomes. Governors have also played their part, holding leaders to account to ensure that funding is used wisely. While there are differences in outcomes for disadvantaged pupils between different cohorts, disadvantaged pupils across the school are now typically making good progress. This is because pupil premium funding is now being used more effectively.

Leaders have also secured improvements in rates of attendance for all groups of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and those who have special

educational needs and/or disabilities. This is because leaders have made clear their high expectations for attendance and punctuality. The previous inspection also highlighted gaps in the information provided on the school website. Leaders have checked that these omissions have been corrected, and the website is now fully up to date and meets statutory requirements in terms of the information that it must contain. You have also ensured that there is a strong safeguarding culture in the school, and that staff are aware of their responsibilities to keep pupils safe.

You have successfully created a positive atmosphere at Lum Head, and staff and pupils clearly enjoy coming to school. Pupils' conduct around school is good and in lessons they show positive attitudes to learning. They are polite and welcoming to visitors, and get on well together at breaktimes. For example, pupils make good use of the recently installed climbing equipment and play together with balls and skipping ropes. The school prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain and diversity is particularly well promoted, as was evident in the high-quality work produced during Black History Month that was on display.

External support

The local authority has provided effective support for the school. This help has secured effective governance arrangements and supported school leaders' drive to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Leaders, including governors, acknowledge the effectiveness of the partnership between the school and the local authority. Leaders work closely with other partner schools and have made effective use of the skills and knowledge of specialist leaders of education, for example in mathematics. The local authority is confident in the ability of school leaders to continue to improve the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Neil Dixon
Her Majesty's Inspector