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Mrs Maire Wright
Headteacher
Parochial CofE Primary and Nursery School, Ashton-under-Lyne
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Dear Mrs Wright

Short inspection of Parochial CofE Primary and Nursery School, Ashton-under-Lyne

Following my visit to the school on 21 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 February 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection, despite a number of changes, including the make-up of its pupil population changing significantly. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language has risen sharply, as has the number of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. You and other leaders have responded quickly to support the needs of these current pupils by adapting the curriculum and resources used to support teaching. You have also provided support for parents to enable them to take an active role in supporting their children's learning.

Also during this time, there have been many unexpected changes to staffing, including leadership. Your effective leadership has supported the development of a new leadership team that shares your drive to improve standards across the school. Similarly, the governing body has also changed, with several newcomers joining. Governors are aware that some governors need to develop their confidence in holding leaders to account. They also are aware that the website does not contain all the detailed information required.

Despite these challenges, you have ensured that the calm, welcoming and inclusive ethos of the school has continued to be very strong and is clearly shared and demonstrated by all. Pupils who spoke to me during the inspection told me that there are many pupils who speak different languages in the school and that everyone is welcome at Parochial CofE Primary and Nursery School. Pupils, including those who

speaking English as an additional language, said that the interesting books they read at school help them to learn to speak English quickly, as well as developing their reading and writing. They said that reading helps them learn new words and understand how to use language well in their own writing.

You have ensured that the high expectations for behaviour have continued to be maintained and pupils respond very well to this. Pupils, particularly those in key stage 2, demonstrate high levels of motivation in their learning and pupils across the school cooperate well with each other. The work you and other leaders are doing to further develop pupils' ability to assess their own success at learning is well received by them.

You have ensured that recommendations made by inspectors at the time of the previous inspection have been a focus of leaders' work. You and other leaders have ensured that teachers have had the opportunity to share best practice and that standards of teaching have improved. As a result of these improvements, the percentage of pupils able to demonstrate that they have reached the higher standards over the last academic year has increased in key stage 1 in reading and mathematics, and in key stage 2 in reading, even though the new curriculum has brought with it higher expectations.

In the past two years, you and other leaders have focused your efforts on increasing the percentage of pupils who meet these higher expectations in reading, writing and mathematics in both key stage 1 and key stage 2. This has been a challenge for some pupils. The resolve you and other leaders have shown in this is clear and there have been marked improvements since 2016, especially in key stage 1 results and the early years. In addition to this, pupils in key stage 2 are now reaching an average rate of progress from key stage 1, even though there is still a gap between how well pupils do in their Year 6 national tests and teacher assessments, compared to other pupils nationally.

You and other leaders are aware that there is still work to do to ensure that all groups of pupils achieve as well as other pupils nationally. The inspection explored how well disadvantaged pupils and boys in key stage 2 are being supported to make as much progress as other groups of pupils. We agreed that progress can be seen for these pupils, especially in their work and positive attitudes to learning. We also agreed that there is further work to be done to ensure that this improvement is embedded by the end of key stage 2.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders give safeguarding a high priority throughout the school. Staff are well trained and have regular updates on how to keep pupils safe throughout the school. Records are kept meticulously by leaders and are fit for purpose. These records enable vulnerable pupils to be tracked easily and check that the appropriate support is in place for them and their families.

You and other leaders ensure that pupils have a good understanding of safety. They

talk about how they are kept safe by adults at school and also about how they keep themselves safe at home, especially when online. When talking to me, they gave good examples of how they had reported concerns to adults and how these were dealt with, making them feel safe.

You ensure that staff, pupils and parents are all clear about how to raise concerns and are confident that the relevant member of staff will deal with any matters raised. Pupils and their parents agree that the inclusive nature of the school makes certain that any bullying is dealt with quickly and effectively. Pupils and parents who spoke to me told me that staff 'do not tolerate bullying in this school'.

Inspection findings

- The inspection focused on several key lines of enquiry. I explored how effectively leaders support the progress of boys in reading and writing in key stage 2. Recent published data shows that progress is slower than that of the girls.
- During the last two years, in response to the local authority's access arrangements, there has been an influx of pupils into key stage 2, mainly boys, whose English was in the very early stages of acquisition. There have also been a significant number of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities placed in the school, needing additional support to manage their behaviour. This change had a significant impact in the 2016 and 2017 test results.
- Pupils are very happy at Parochial CofE Primary and Nursery School and were very keen to tell me when we met about work they were most proud of. Most, including boys, chose writing. They used correct technical vocabulary to describe how they had improved their work, demonstrating age-appropriate skills.
- The actions you have taken to help boys keep up with girls in response to this emerging issue of a 'gender gap' is beginning to have an impact on data for the rest of key stage 2. You have raised the profile of reading and motivated all pupils, especially boys, to read by providing them with contemporary texts that appeal to them. The improvements you have made to the library and enticing reading areas in classrooms ensure that all pupils are keen to read more frequently and widely. As a result, the progress pupils make in reading is improving. In addition to this, the gap between how well boys and girls do is diminishing.
- In writing, the gap is more apparent. You explained how you and other leaders have identified that boys are less motivated to write. This is an underlying barrier to their achievement. You have introduced writing experiences that are linked to enrichment activities that boys are interested in. Boys demonstrate more enthusiasm and self-satisfaction in completing extended pieces of writing. This work is in the early stages and needs to be embedded to secure improvements in progress.
- Another focus for the inspection was the support provided for disadvantaged pupils. You and other leaders over the last academic year have ensured that disadvantaged pupils in key stage 1 meet the increased expectation that the revised curriculum introduced. You have provided focused, additional support for these pupils to improve the rates of progress they make in key stage 2 in

mathematics and reading. Similar improvements have also been seen in how well disadvantaged children in Year 1 and the early years are performing compared to their peers.

- Improvement in progress for disadvantaged pupils in writing in key stage 2 is less evident. Nevertheless, the 2017 national test results showed an improvement in attainment compared to 2016. There is still work to be done to ensure that the progress demonstrated by disadvantaged pupils shown in reading and mathematics is as evident in writing.
- Further to the focus on reading in key stage 2, we discussed how well pupils in Year 1 do in the phonics check. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard declined gradually from 2014 to 2016. In 2017, this proportion increased as result of improvements you made to the teaching of phonics, but this remains slightly below the national average.
- Another key line of enquiry included the role of governors, especially in checking that the school's website includes all the required information. During the inspection, it was clear that, like you and other leaders, governors demonstrated a good understanding about the current school priorities. However, recently there have been a significant number of new governors. Governors acknowledge that they need to ensure that new governors are quickly 'brought up to speed' to support the work of leaders in improving standards further.
- One of these tasks is to ensure that the school website includes all the information it needs to, including greater detail about how the physical education and sports premium funding is used. Also, information is needed about the curriculum, for subjects other than the core curriculum subjects of English, mathematics and science.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- disadvantaged pupils in key stage 2 make the same progress in writing as they make in other areas
- the changes made to support boys in key stage 2 are embedded to ensure that their progress is as strong as the girls' in reading and writing
- pupils in Year 1 achieve as well as other pupils nationally in the phonics check
- the skills of new governors are utilised effectively to hold leaders to account for the progress that pupils make and to maintain the school's website.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of Manchester, the regional schools commissioner and the director of

children's services for Tameside. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Claire Cropper
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I checked your safeguarding documentation and met with a range of staff, including yourself, other leaders and a group of governors. One of the governors I met with is also a representative of the diocese. I also spoke with a representative from the local authority on the telephone. I talked with parents as they dropped off their children at school in the morning. I talked to pupils about their work as I visited classrooms with you. We also looked at pupils' workbooks together as we walked around the school. I listened to pupils read and met with a group of pupils from across the school who showed me some of their work.