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Mrs Susan Tickle
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Dear Mrs Tickle

Short inspection of Hollingworth Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 16 January 2018, 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 November 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

With the support of an able deputy headteacher, you provide strong and enthusiastic leadership for the school. You conduct regular and detailed analyses of results and know precisely what the strengths and weaknesses of the school are. Your improvement plan is precise. In deciding on the actions to achieve your aims, you take careful note of a wide range of research findings. An example of this is the way that you approached the improvement of handwriting in the early years. You review the impact of your actions regularly and make any necessary modifications in a timely way.

Morale in the school is high, which is reflected in the very positive responses to the staff survey. The parents who spoke to me and those who responded to the online questionnaire, 'Parent View', have a high opinion of the school. They complimented the dedication of the staff, the good communication with families and the way that teachers challenge children to do their best. Pupils told me that they enjoy coming to school. They approach their lessons with enthusiasm and high levels of concentration. They also behave very well around the school. They relate well to each other, to adults and to visitors to the school and are happy to engage in conversations about their work. A notable feature of the school is the way that pupils in every year group are able to present their ideas very coherently, in well-formulated language.

The governors provide you and your staff with an appropriate balance of challenge and support. Through regular visits to school, they check very carefully on how effectively plans are being implemented. The governors ensure that additional funding is used appropriately to support disadvantaged pupils and to develop physical education and sports in the school. They agreed that their plans lack clear targets against which they can measure the precise impact on pupils' performance.

At the time of the last inspection, you were asked to: raise standards in writing by ensuring that pupils apply their knowledge of grammar to the work they produce; provide pupils with opportunities to conduct independent research, using information technology; and ensure that lessons move at a faster pace. You have addressed each of these areas for improvement successfully.

The pupils are not only taught the elements of grammar. They also have regular opportunities to apply this knowledge to writing extended pieces of work in a variety of styles. For example, in English, Year 6 pupils learned about connecting clauses. They then applied and used this knowledge to write an argument in favour of keeping a lion as a pet. Because of the approach that you take, results in the English, grammar and punctuation test, as well as in the writing test, have risen to above average since the last inspection.

Over the last four years, you have invested in a range of new technology equipment and programs. As a result, when they research a topic, the pupils are no longer confined to looking in reference books. We saw pupils using mobile devices to find information about Ancient Greece. We also saw pupils using computer programs to challenge themselves to extend their comprehension skills.

You and your staff place a consistent emphasis on ensuring that time in lessons is used to good effect. Teachers and teaching assistants work closely together to plan lessons that are lively and engaging. They also ensure that specific pupils, or groups of pupils, receive additional support to help them to progress well. As a result, very little time is wasted and the pupils work with concentration and interest.

The information about the curriculum on your website is limited. I therefore wanted to know what the quality of the curriculum in the school is. Examination of work in books and discussions with middle leaders show that the school provides pupils with a broad and balanced curriculum. This is done through a combination of topic work and lessons that focus on a single subject. The middle leaders agreed that there is a need to improve assessment in subjects other than English and mathematics. They also agreed that, in topic work, teachers do not focus enough on extending the knowledge, skills and understanding that are unique to each subject.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Your records are up to date and detailed.

Staff and governors have received the required training on safeguarding. Those I spoke to know how to identify possible signs of abuse and what they should do if they have any concerns about the welfare of a child.

The parents and staff who completed the online surveys are confident that pupils are safe at the school. This matches the views of the pupils. All the pupils who attended a meeting with me said that they feel safe at school and on the way to and from school. They know which staff to go to if they have any worries or concerns and are confident that they will receive any help they need. They said that there is some bullying in the school but it is dealt with promptly and successfully. They know how to keep themselves safe when using the internet and social media because they receive regular reminders about this. They are taught about how to keep safe near roads, railways and water.

Through regular fire practices, pupils learn what to do in the case of a fire. All fire equipment and carbon monoxide alarms are checked regularly. The site is secure and access to the building is carefully controlled. The school has appropriate systems to check on the suitability of staff to work with children.

You work closely with a range of agencies to provide additional support to children and families who are experiencing particular difficulties. You have not hesitated to complain to the relevant authorities when you feel that children are not receiving the services they should.

Inspection findings

- From 2014 to 2016, results in the early years improved, but remained below average. I was interested to know what accounted for this and whether the improvements are continuing. Your figures show that children enter the Nursery with skills and knowledge below those typical for their age. During their time in the Nursery, they make good progress. Over the last two years, there have been clear improvements in the results in reading and writing. However, results in mathematics have not shown the same improvement. This is because many of the children have difficulties in understanding the concepts of shape, space and measure. You have, therefore, made this an area of particular focus in the current year and you have set ambitious targets for improvement.
- Phonics results have improved considerably since 2015. I wanted to know whether this improvement has been maintained and how well the pupils currently in Year 1 are performing. You were able to show me that you have invested in new resources for reading and provided staff with further training in this area. You identify pupils who find reading difficult and provide them with additional phonics sessions. Because of this, results in 2017 were once again above average. Your figures show that the pupils currently in Year 1 are making good progress. Therefore, the improvements continue.
- Over the last four years, results in reading, writing and mathematics have improved. In 2017, the proportions reaching the expected level of performance were above average in all three subjects. In terms of pupils achieving a greater depth of understanding, results were above average for writing and mathematics

and average for reading. I asked you to show me whether these good standards are being maintained by pupils currently in key stage 1. You were able to provide me with convincing evidence that this is the case. You were also able to show that the traditionally good performance in key stage 2 is being maintained.

- In 2015 and 2016, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities was not good enough. I asked you to provide me with attendance information for last year and this year, to establish whether the situation has improved. You were able to provide clear reasons why some pupils, in the past, had been unavoidably absent. The most recent figures show that the situation has improved. Attendance overall and for groups of pupils is now at least average.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they improve the assessment of pupils' attainment and progress in subjects other than English and mathematics
- in topic work, teachers place a consistent focus on developing the knowledge, skills and understanding relevant to each subject area
- plans to support disadvantaged pupils and to develop physical education and sports include precise targets, so that governors can measure the precise impact that the additional funding is having on pupils' performance.

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

Yours sincerely

Aelwyn Pugh
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and the deputy headteacher to discuss your self-evaluation. I met the chairs of the two governing body committees. I also spoke to a representative of the local authority and the school improvement partner. You and I visited lessons to observe teaching and look at books. I discussed behaviour and attendance with you and the SEN coordinator and you gave me information on safeguarding. I met a group of eight pupils chosen at random from Years 3 to 6. I spoke to 16 parents as they brought their children to school and examined the 49 responses to the online questionnaire 'Parent View'. I examined a range of documentation, including your self-evaluation and school development plan.