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Mr Andrew Kilcoyne
Headteacher
Mauldeth Road Primary School
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Dear Mr Kilcoyne

Short inspection of Mauldeth Road Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 13 February 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 January 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Pupils progress well from their starting points. They enjoy lessons. Pupils learn much from wider activities such as gardening, guitar playing and gymnastics. They gain a good understanding of the school's values of courtesy, kindness and cooperation. Staff and leaders promote pupils' understanding of the diverse world of modern Britain. For example, they celebrate Black History Month and teach pupils about the rich geometry and patterns in Islamic art. The school remains popular with members of the local community. The numbers of pupils attending the school have grown steadily over recent years.

Parents and carers are pleased that you know each child and family. They say that you care about each child's learning and their experience of success. Parents say that you listen to their views and respond quickly to any concerns. During the inspection, I was impressed when parents told me that staff enjoy their jobs. I agree, because staff told me that morale is high. Teachers and teaching assistants have much respect for your firm but gentle leadership of the school. They gain from their training and development opportunities. They value the support and advice they receive from senior leaders about how to improve their teaching.

At the previous inspection, inspectors recommended that staff move the most able pupils on quickly to harder work in lessons, where appropriate. Leaders and staff focus carefully now on this aspect of teaching. Pupils find their learning much more challenging and enjoyable across subjects. Staff assess pupils more thoroughly and respond more fully when pupils grasp new learning speedily. Pupils increasingly

complete work to deepen their understanding. You are not complacent about the recent improvements in teaching and in the skills of the most able pupils. We discussed your expectation that teachers should give even more challenge for pupils' learning, particularly in Year 6.

Inspectors also asked leaders to improve how they track and analyse the learning of groups of pupils in different subjects. Your response to this issue faltered at first because new school arrangements did not give you the information that you required. You now address this successfully through your extensive and ongoing revision of the school's assessment and tracking systems. Staff use much better information about pupils' learning to adapt their teaching. Leaders and governors now review and debate aspects of pupils' performance with much more precision than in the past.

Staff and leaders take many successful steps to improve pupils' reading skills in key stage 1. These efforts are leading to many more pupils becoming skilled readers. Even so, not enough pupils in Year 1 can use phonics to read more complex words. Leaders and governors need to give this priority even sharper focus to make sure that all pupils develop the skills they need. In addition, some staff do not always pick up on the mistakes pupils make in their phonics activities, to help them improve.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders make sure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. The headteacher is a designated leader for safeguarding. He shares oversight of arrangements with a highly trained deputy designated person. She has dedicated time to support pupils, teachers and teaching assistants. Staff and leaders are available regularly to speak to parents and pupils. Pupils use boxes placed around the school to raise any anxieties they have. Leaders check the boxes routinely and respond to any issues. At the start of the school day, teaching assistants oversee pupils' arrival at school carefully and chat with pupils. Staff challenge adults they do not recognise who wish to enter other parts of the school site from the playground. Office staff check the credentials of all formal visitors in detail.

Staff know about local and national safeguarding issues because leaders give them regular training. Leaders keep detailed records of any concerns about pupils. Their referrals of concerns to other agencies are prompt and appropriate. The school office manager reviews frequently and precisely all school information about the checks on staff suitability to work with pupils. Arrangements to record information about staff are first rate. All relevant changes to school records of staff are checked regularly by senior leaders. Governors are trained in safeguarding and make appropriate checks on the work of the school. However, governors need to check more thoroughly; leaders have given them more information to ensure that this happens.

Inspection findings

- Leaders rightly consider improving pupils' ability to read in key stage 1 as a priority. Leaders make sure that staff gain from training to apply the school's selected phonics programme. Staff teach phonics daily and link activities closely to those set for writing. They focus pupils' attention carefully on words with letter sounds that are an exception to what they have been taught. Pupils enthuse about the competitions staff create to challenge them to read. Staff plan activities in detail to develop pupils' understanding and interpretation of reading through story time. For example, staff use a wide range of challenging texts and different styles and types of book each week. Displays put up by staff in classrooms support pupils' phonics learning very helpfully. Leaders purchase reading books and resources to support learning much better than in the past. Leaders support all staff to celebrate books and reading in worthwhile ways. Staff use assessments of pupils precisely to adapt learning activities to match pupils' needs. However, you agreed that staff do not give pupils enough help when they say letter sounds incorrectly.
- Improvements to the teaching of reading are beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' achievement. In 2017, the proportion of key stage 1 pupils reaching the standards expected in their reading rose sharply to above the national average. Disadvantaged pupils achieved well. The proportion of pupils exceeding expected standards also rose. School information shows that current pupils' progress in reading in Year 2 is good. However, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in using phonics in Year 1 was below average in 2017. Leaders give staff valuable support and advice, but some of leaders' plans for improving pupils' phonics in Year 1 lack precision. Governors do not focus sharply enough on this aspect of the school's work in order to challenge leaders.
- Pupils achieve strongly in mathematics and enjoy their learning. In each year group, pupils learn through a wide range of real scenarios to practise and refine their numeracy skills. Staff make skilful use of other opportunities to develop pupils' knowledge of mathematics. For example, in a whole-school assembly pupils learned about Descartes inventing coordinates in the 1600s. They learned too about Ada Lovelace being the first computer programmer in the 1800s. Some of the best learning in the school makes meaningful and worthwhile links between pupils' learning in history, English and mathematics. Across classes, pupils enjoy and gain much extra learning from staff's increasing emphasis on teaching through problem-solving and puzzles. The subject leader's skilful leadership of mathematics is raising the quality of the work staff do. She uses her own extra training to assist staff to improve their knowledge. For example, the subject leader trains teachers to use pictorial representations of problems and concepts, to help pupils visualise and understand mathematical problems more precisely.
- Some teaching, for example about World War II in key stage 2, is particularly memorable. Pupils learn from visits to real air raid shelters and also from reviewing information in films and in newspapers. They learn about the significant role played by women in supporting the war effort. Teachers' thorough planning of activities leads pupils to consider challenging questions, such as

'Hitler did not attack Britain straight away. Why not?' This makes pupils' learning worthwhile and means that they think deeply about the new knowledge they are acquiring.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- all staff in key stage 1 respond to pupils' errors in saying the sounds that letters make
- reviews and plans for improving the school identify even more precisely the actions to improve Year 1 pupils' understanding of phonics.

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

Tim Vaughan
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection I carried out these activities:

- spoke with some parents as they brought their children to school
- spoke with some teaching assistants as they supervised pupils' arrival at school
- met with the headteacher and two assistant headteachers to discuss improvement in the school since the previous inspection
- met with three governors, including the chair and vice-chair
- met with the leaders for mathematics and English
- spoke by telephone to a representative of the local authority
- visited a sample of classrooms with the headteacher and one assistant headteacher to observe activities
- spoke to some pupils and considered examples of their recent work
- reviewed with the headteacher and the school office manager the school's records of checks made on the suitability of staff to work with pupils
- reviewed a sample of policies and information on the school's website
- checked a sample of school safeguarding records
- reviewed responses from 47 staff to an Ofsted questionnaire

- reviewed responses from 35 parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View
- considered leaders' analysis of responses from 116 parents to a school questionnaire conducted in 2017.