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Mr Christopher Ashley  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Ashley

### **Short inspection of Fairfield Community 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 May 2014.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. The aim, 'Happiness and High Standards', drives the school's work and characterises its ethos. This is evident in many ways, not least the high level of parental satisfaction and pupils' enjoyment of school. Pupils like and respect you, and parents and carers are immensely appreciative of your commitment to their children's education and welfare. The comment, 'Fairfield provides everything I could ask for from a school and many things I never even thought of,' reflected the views of many.

Your leadership team, governors and staff share your fervent commitment to each child reaching their potential. You regularly drop into lessons and review pupils' books to check that they are learning well and that your high expectations of teaching are being met. Other leaders support you well in this work and in analysing teachers' assessments of pupils' attainment. Leaders' frequent reviews of this information enable them to quickly spot any pupils who are not making the progress you expect. Where this is the case, support is put in place to address the matter. These successful systems work hand-in-hand with those to support disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils. Many pupils face significant barriers to learning. However, the strong quality of teaching, care and guidance you ensure does much to help pupils overcome these barriers. Pupils who have social and emotional difficulties, for example, benefit immensely from the calm and supportive environment and additional nurture support. This ensures that pupils are more receptive to learning and working with their peers.

Your positive view of teaching is evident in the progress pupils make and the standards they attain by the end of Year 6. Since your school was last inspected, a new national curriculum has been introduced and pupils are now expected to attain higher standards at the end of both key stages. Notwithstanding these changes, the proportions of Year 6 pupils attaining both the expected and higher standard in reading, writing and mathematics have been above average for the last two years. Disadvantaged pupils also achieve very well. In 2016 and 2017, these pupils' progress was in the top 20% of schools nationally in reading and mathematics. In 2017, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils attaining at least the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics was above that of non-disadvantaged pupils nationally. Standards in grammar, punctuation and spelling and in science have been above average in 2016 and 2017. It is clear that, by the time they leave Year 6, pupils are well prepared for secondary school.

On starting Nursery, children's skills are mostly below what is typical for their age and some children's skills are significantly below what is typical. By the end of Reception, the proportion of children attaining the good level of development needed to be ready for work in Year 1 is below average. However, the school's assessment information shows that, as reported by the last inspection, children continue to make good progress in early years. As in the rest of the school, this includes the above-average proportion of children who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. An ongoing aim is to increase the proportion of children attaining a good level of development. However, you are mindful of the needs of these and other vulnerable children when setting improvement priorities for attainment by the end of Reception. Progress in key stage 1 is good. From below-average starting points on beginning Year 1, pupils attain broadly average standards in reading, writing, mathematics and science by the end of Year 2.

When the school was last inspected, leaders were asked to strengthen some aspects of leadership and to ensure that the most able pupils were consistently challenged. You have addressed these recommendations well. You deploy leadership and management responsibilities wisely. You ensure that decisions about staff training are matched to school priorities and the needs of individual staff members. Staff appointments have been judicious and successful. All of this has increased the school's capacity for further improvement. You ensure that leaders and teachers maintain a continual focus on the learning of different pupil groups, including the most able. Testament to your success in relation to this group of pupils is the above-average proportions of Year 6 pupils attaining the higher standards in the 2016 and 2017 reading and mathematics tests. The proportions of pupils working at greater depth in their writing in these two years were similar to those for pupils nationally and reflected good progress.

The high standards you expect of pupils' behaviour and attendance pay off. You are successful in ensuring that most pupils attend school regularly and behave well when they get there. In the last three years, rates of attendance and persistent absence have been similar to national averages. Last year, persistent absence reduced even further and was below national figures. Pupils appreciate the care and support that teachers provide and their work to make lessons interesting and

enjoyable. Pupils recognise the importance of good behaviour and showing respect for all people, regardless of any difference. They explained, however, that although they do not hear racist name-calling, they have sometimes heard the word 'gay' being used inappropriately. The school's ethos is clearly one of inclusivity. Each pupil is valued and treated with respect. School policies reflect leaders' commitment to valuing and respecting diversity and promoting equality and British values. Nevertheless, pupils' understanding of some these ideas is not strong. The work leaders are currently undertaking to develop personal, social and health education has appropriately identified 'valuing difference' as a focus.

You keep comprehensive files of any incidents of misbehaviour. These include good detail of what happened and the school's response. Records also show that pupils are expected to reflect on their behaviour and think about what they would do differently in the same situation. This information, and your high presence around the school, ensure that you always have a good insight into behaviour. You agreed, however, that a more detailed analysis, for example of types, frequencies and contexts of misbehaviour, would be useful in providing an even clearer picture with which to inform your future actions.

Governors are experienced and dedicated to playing their part in the school's continued improvement. They ask leaders probing questions about pupils' achievement. This includes the effect that school spending is having on improving the outcomes for key groups, such as disadvantaged pupils. Governors have published online most of the information that is expected. They have not, however, set and published their equality objectives. With the exception of information about the modern foreign language taught in key stage 2, all of the required information about the curriculum is published. We agreed, however, that it would be useful to add information about the organisation of the curriculum for pupils in mixed-age classes.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding procedures are fit for purpose. There are thorough checks on the suitability of staff and other adults who visit the school to be around children. You are trained to lead this aspect of the school's work. Other leaders are trained to a similarly high standard to support and deputise for you if you are not in school. Other staff receive regular safeguarding training. They draw well on this to bring any concerns they have about pupils' safety or well-being to your attention. You respond promptly to these concerns and, where necessary, involve outside agencies. You work effectively with these professionals to support pupils and their families. Records and case notes are detailed and maintained well.

Pupils receive ongoing information about how to keep themselves safe, including when working online. They have a secure understanding of the dangers of using technology and how to protect themselves from these dangers. Your school's website provides parents with some useful links to educational websites. There are no links, however, to websites that educate parents about online safety. We agreed

that this would be a useful addition to the parents' page.

## **Inspection findings**

- A line of enquiry for the inspection was the extent to which the curriculum enables pupils to achieve well in subjects other than reading, writing and mathematics. While you ensure that pupils receive a strong grounding in the basics, this does not come at the expense of other subjects. Over the course of a year, half-termly topics cover the wider curriculum. These are planned under a common theme, such as 'Heroes and Villains', to motivate pupils and link learning in different subjects. A number of pupils I spoke to said that 'topic' was their favourite lesson. Pupils were also able to identify subjects within the topics that they liked best. Your drive to widen pupils' experiences is evident in the practical nature of many activities and the range of memorable educational visits and visitors you provide. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about visits to museums and farms and working with a drama group on work linked to history and geography. Teachers are creative in planning good opportunities for pupils to practise skills in reading, writing, mathematics and computing across the curriculum. Their assessments show that most pupils reach standards typical for their age in all of the subjects that topics cover. A wide range of extra-curricular activities and clubs enriches the curriculum. Parents are appreciative of the time staff give to run these activities.
- Another line of enquiry was the extent to which the curriculum promotes pupils' understanding of British values, diversity and equality. Aspects of pupils' learning and the school's inclusive ethos give pupils an insight into these ideas. However, the term 'British values' meant little to the pupils I spoke to. The sample of work leaders provided did not demonstrate well how these values, and ideas about diversity and equality, are developed within subjects that have significant potential to do so. Cultural and religious diversity have a higher profile than other aspects, while issues about race equality are more prominent than those about gender, disability and sexual orientation. Notwithstanding this, there is some good practice within the school that can be built on. In their learning about Benjamin Britten, for example, older pupils explained that he was unable to marry his life partner because same-sex marriages were unlawful at that time.
- My final line of enquiry was about the school's use of exclusion. This was because the number of exclusions and repeat exclusions has been above average in the last three years. You have a behaviour policy that is clear and fair and you implement it very effectively. This includes fixed-term exclusion where misbehaviour is serious enough to warrant it. I am satisfied that the decisions you make in imposing this sanction are appropriate and not taken lightly.

## **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils gain a deeper understanding of British values, diversity and equality so they are prepared for life in modern Britain, and governors meet their duty to

prepare and publish specific and measurable equality objectives

- systems for reviewing behaviour are enhanced by a more formal analysis that illustrates patterns that will further inform leaders' evaluations and actions
- the school's website includes information about the modern foreign language studied in key stage 2; clearer information about how the curriculum is organised for pupils in mixed-age classes; and information to help parents understand how they can keep their children safe, particularly when using the internet.

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

Yours sincerely

Margot D'Arcy  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

I met with you and your senior leadership team to discuss the school's evaluation of its work and priorities for improvement. I reviewed a range of school documents, including those relating to safeguarding and behaviour. I considered a sample of pupils' topic work and teachers' assessments of their achievements. We observed learning and behaviour in a sample of lessons. I had a formal discussion with a group of pupils from key stage 2 and spoke to others informally at lunchtime. I met with six governors and a representative of the local authority. I considered 21 responses to Ofsted's online parent survey, including 13 written responses. I also took account of 78 paper copies of this questionnaire that you sent to parents and that were returned to the school. I reviewed 33 responses to the online staff survey. There were no responses to the online pupil survey, but I took account of a recent pupil survey conducted by the school.