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Mrs Lucy Hughes  
Headteacher  
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Cheshire  
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Dear Mrs Hughes

### **Short inspection of Arlies Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 27 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 March 2014.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You and your deputy headteacher have been in post since September 2017. You have quickly and accurately identified priorities to drive the school forward through robust development planning. Leaders' and governors' self-evaluation of the school is accurate.

Parents and carers and pupils hold this school in high regard. Parents that I spoke to had nothing but praise for the school. Parents appreciate the levels of communication between home and school; they are happy that their children are cared for well. One parent, with a view typical of many, stated, 'There have been real improvements in this school over the last 12 months. Communication with parents has been fantastic. The headteacher has made some serious attendance commitments and I feel that it will only improve further.'

Pupils that I spoke to said that they enjoy school. Pupils know that they can talk to adults about their worries and that adults value their contributions. The older pupils that I spoke to were enthusiastic about their learning and the responsibilities that they have around school. Pupils were keen to talk about the many charities that the school supports. For example, the school council recently coordinated fundraising, through the sale of cakes, to raise money for a local animal shelter. Pupils that I spoke to in classes said that work is hard but their teachers make it fun.

Governors are active in the school and have a detailed understanding of the strengths and areas for development. You provide them with detailed information,

which enables them to hold you and school leaders to account. Governors are knowledgeable about standards in the school and know how well different groups of pupils are doing.

Since the previous inspection, school leaders have taken effective action to address the identified areas for improvement, the focus of which was to improve teaching across the school so that all pupils achieve their potential. Since then, the leadership of the school experienced a significant period of turbulence because of a high turnover of senior staff. A new leadership team is in place and the school has once again entered a period of stability.

One of your first actions as headteacher was to introduce a new teaching and learning policy, which linked more closely to teacher performance management targets. Teachers and leaders engage in a variety of monitoring activities to improve the quality of teaching. For example, you scrutinise pupils' books and you observe teaching and learning regularly. Records of your monitoring show a positive picture of teaching across the school. Governors are kept well informed of the outcomes of monitoring activities. For example, you recently provided them with a detailed report about the effectiveness of interventions that are delivered across the school. Together, you and I looked in pupils' books and talked to pupils in lessons; we saw that levels of challenge are evident across a range of subject areas. You give pupils every opportunity to achieve their full potential and develop a range of skills across a broad curriculum. For example, in key stage 2 we looked at the wonderful artwork and writing linked to the Ancient Egyptians and the Tudors.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

In your role as designated safeguarding lead, you work diligently, ensuring that pupils are safe and that all safeguarding measures are effective. You make sure that all staff and governors have received up-to-date safeguarding, basic awareness training and 'Prevent' duty training. There are clear procedures for staff to raise concerns; you deal with these in a timely manner. All records of the suitability of staff to work in school are in place.

You work with a range of outside agencies, including children's social care. You keep detailed records of all referrals and partnership working. Governors are aware of their safeguarding responsibilities in school. Parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, overwhelmingly feel that their children are well cared for and well looked after at this school.

### **Inspection findings**

- During this inspection, I focused on three lines of enquiry. The first of these focused on the quality of the provision in the early years. Children enter the Reception Year with skills below what is typical for their age. For several years, the proportion of children leaving the early years with a good level of development has been below what is achieved nationally. Governors acknowledge that systems that were in place last year were not effective.

Together, you have appointed a new leader for the early years and redeployed staff to ensure consistency of skills across the classes. You told me that 'passion and creativity were missing', something you are in the process of renewing. As part of this improvement work, you consulted the school improvement partner to help develop areas of the provision. An action plan is now in place to address issues identified.

- From looking at a range of documentation and visiting the early years, it is evident that you are taking effective action to address past inconsistencies. Your own monitoring has indicated that staff have moved away from an over-reliance on worksheets; areas of the provision are carefully planned to ensure a wide coverage of skills. Your assessment data shows that children in the current Reception Year are now making good progress from their starting points. We agreed that you should build on the effective actions that have already been taken, to further enhance the progress of children in the early years.
- The second area that I looked at concerned the progress that pupils make in reading and mathematics at the end of key stage 2. Published data indicates that, by the end of key stage 2, pupils typically make better progress in writing than they do in mathematics and reading.
- Your school development plan focuses heavily on improving the teaching of reading. You identify comprehension skills as a focus for the whole school. You have invested heavily in new resources and challenging texts. Pupils have opportunities to read widely and often. For example, I observed pupils reading newspapers aimed at children. I observed pupils responding to song lyrics and teachers skilfully modelling reading. You have invested in visits from authors who aim to motivate older boys to read more often. Your monitoring shows that pupils enjoy reading, but you acknowledge that more needs to be done to ensure that there is consistent delivery across key stage 2. This was evident in some of the classrooms that we visited. Although teachers plan activities to improve pupils' reading, not all activities are planned carefully enough to ensure that pupils make the best possible progress in every lesson.
- In mathematics, you have been a key player in the delivery of mastery teaching across the north west of England. You provide support to schools locally and regionally. You have clear systems in place for the teaching of mathematics at your school. Pupils I spoke to were able to discuss their work; they know what they needed to do to make it even better. In mathematics, you give the pupils time to expand on their reasoning. Clear challenges drive the most able pupils on. From looking in pupils' books and observing in lessons, we found that sometimes work is not progressively challenging, and strategies are not fully embedded by all teachers. This observation was mirrored in your recent monitoring of mathematics in school.
- Progress data for all groups of pupils in school shows an encouraging picture in reading and mathematics this year. In most classes, pupils' progress in mathematics and reading is now as good as that in writing.
- The final area that I looked at during this inspection was attendance. The current attendance figure is just below the national average. Rates of persistent absences have fallen slightly since last year but remain well above the national

average. You are active in the promotion of attendance. You send home text messages as a first response. If you receive no reply, you follow this up with a telephone call. You now employ a child and family support worker to work closely with families to encourage attendance. This year, you now issue fixed penalty notices in line with the local authority guidance. You work closely with the education welfare officer to target families whose children continue to have high rates of absence. From looking at your attendance data, I was able to see that several families have affected your data heavily. You have continued to work with these families to address the issues. For, example, you introduced a 'walking bus' that collects pupils from the neighbouring streets. We agreed that these efforts must continue so that attendance improves.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they build on effective actions to further enhance the progress of children in the early years
- they continue to embed recent changes to the teaching of mathematics and reading, ensuring that pupils make better progress by the end of key stage 2
- they increase rates of attendance and continue to decrease persistent absences.

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

John Donald  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During this inspection, I met with you and your leadership team. I met with three governors, including the chair of governors. I held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. We visited classes across the school. We looked at pupils' books, observed parts of lessons and spoke to pupils about their learning. I listened to pupils from key stage 1 and key stage 2 read.

I considered 39 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire and 17 responses that I received via free text. I considered 13 responses to the staff survey and 16 responses to the pupil survey. At the start of the day, I spoke to parents, and to pupils throughout the day. I examined safeguarding documentation, including the school's single central record. A review of the school's website was carried out.