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Mr Philip Webster
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Dear Mr Webster

Short inspection of Acacias Community Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 13 March 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 lead a calm and welcoming school which encourages pupils to thrive. Pupils across the school are polite and well behaved. In lessons, pupils show a determination to do their best.

You and the senior leadership team lead the school with skill and determination. Through clear and effective communication, you share your high aspirations for pupils with staff, governors and parents and carers. The school has continued to improve. The training you provide for the enthusiastic staff consistently improves their practice. Teachers work closely together and share their ideas to help to improve teaching and learning. As a result, pupils receive skilled teaching that systematically develops their knowledge and skills across the curriculum.

The governing body shares your ambitions for the school. Since the previous inspection, governors have improved the checks they make on pupils' progress. As a result of careful monitoring, governors have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Governors have checked that the recent improvements in the teaching of reading are improving standards. They have a thorough knowledge of the steps you are taking to improve the role of subject leaders.

Pupils appreciate the many leadership roles available to them, including being members of the school council and the eco council. They value being involved in school decisions, such as improvements to the school playground. The pupils' anti-bullying council helps to reinforce your high standards of behaviour at breaktimes. Through lessons and assemblies, staff teach pupils to respect and value others. As a result, pupils told me that bullying is very rare and teachers quickly deal with any misbehaviour.

Parents share pupils' very positive views of the school. Their responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, commonly identified the many opportunities you provide for parents to improve their children's learning. Parents of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities were keen to share how well the school supports the varied needs of pupils. Parents commonly talked about the efforts staff make to support pupils' learning and well-being. A typical comment was 'The staff are incredibly hardworking and enthusiastic, and always have time to speak to parents about any concerns.'

You and the leadership team have taken appropriate actions to address the areas for development identified at the last inspection. You have made sure that pupils make strong progress in their writing. Through skilful questioning and precise teaching, teachers show pupils exactly how to improve their work. You have also made sure that teachers challenge pupils, including the most able, in different areas of the curriculum. For example, in physical education, frequent and carefully planned training for staff has led to teachers very sharply focusing on developing pupils' skills. In art and design, local artists have supported pupils in producing work of a high standard. Detailed, colourful examples of pupils' sculptures and paintings make the school environment vibrant and attractive.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors have made sure that safeguarding arrangements are of high quality and fit for purpose. Leaders carry out statutory checks on the suitability of staff to work with children. Staff teach pupils how to keep themselves safe, including fire safety and road safety. Those pupils who are 'digital leaders' help to teach other pupils how to keep themselves safe online. Leaders have ensured that the appropriate monitoring and filtering arrangements are in place for the school's internet connection.

Through regular training, staff have up-to-date knowledge of safeguarding. They are vigilant about the potential risks pupils may face and know the correct actions to take to report concerns. Records relating to pupils' welfare are appropriate. Leaders work well with other professionals and with parents to make sure that pupils receive the support they need to be safe.

Inspection findings

- The inspection focused on a number of key lines of enquiry, the first of which related to how well children learn in the early years. I found that staff plan

engaging activities which develop well children's skills, including in writing and number. Staff use questioning very precisely to develop children's communication and language skills. Leaders work closely with parents and other nurseries to make sure that children who have SEN and/or disabilities receive additional support as soon as they start school. Children play with concentration and cooperation and move calmly around the classroom areas. I found that, as a result of skilled teaching, children make good progress from their varied starting points and achieve well.

- For my second key line of enquiry, I checked how well pupils learn phonics. I found that children start school with skills in reading below those expected for their age. The majority of pupils speak English as an additional language. Leaders have made sure that, in the early years and in key stage 1, phonics teaching takes place very regularly and precisely matches children's and pupils' needs. The classrooms contain plenty of printed words and engaging books to help to develop pupils' learning. Leaders make regular checks to ensure that teaching is effective. Experienced and skilled staff give extra support to pupils falling behind. I found that staff teach phonics well and pupils quickly and confidently develop their early reading skills.
- I also looked at how well pupils in key stage 2 achieve in reading. This was because, in 2017 by the end of Year 6, attainment in reading was not as high as in writing and mathematics. I found that you have taken prompt and effective action to improve how well pupils achieve in reading. Leaders have made sure that pupils, including those who speak English as an additional language, develop a secure understanding of rich and varied vocabulary. This is because teachers use language precisely and classroom displays include key words and definitions to support pupils' learning. Teachers carefully develop pupils' reading skills, such as inference and scanning. You provide pupils with ready access to high-quality books and teachers read to pupils frequently. As a result of steps you have taken, pupils achieve well. They read with fluency and understanding. Leaders carefully check pupils' learning to make sure that improvements are sustained and a greater proportion of pupils reach the expected standards or above for their age.
- During the inspection, I considered whether pupils receive a broad and balanced curriculum. Those pupils with whom I spoke said that learning is interesting and fun. This is because you have carefully planned an enjoyable curriculum which develops pupils' skills in different subject areas. Pupils relish exciting events, such as a recent writing week about an alien spacecraft which had crashed on the school field. Pupils told me that frequent visits and visitors help to bring their learning to life. Pupils spoke with enthusiasm about recent trips to The Lowry and to the Imperial War Museum North. You make full use of the local environment and give pupils a wide range of experiences to develop skills, such as resilience and teamwork. Across the school, pupils' high-quality art and written work are celebrated in displays. Following a Year 6 visit to see the Blackpool illuminations, pupils were keen to share their carefully designed and constructed models.
- During my visit, I found subject leaders are enthusiastic and support each other in their teaching. As a result of frequent training, they have a secure knowledge

of the subjects they lead. Leaders make sure that subject leaders check how well pupils are learning and identify how to further improve teaching. However, subject leaders are only just beginning to develop systems to measure pupils' progress in subjects such as design technology, history and science, and using this information to improve teaching and learning.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- improvements to teaching and learning in reading are sustained and result in a higher proportion of pupils attaining the expected standard or above by the end of Year 6
- the roles of subject leaders are embedded so that they have a greater impact on the quality of teaching and learning.

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

Elizabeth Stevens
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, senior leaders and a group of teachers, including middle leaders. I also met with three governors. I spoke with a representative of the local authority. I met with eight pupils from key stage 2 and spoke informally with other pupils during lessons. I visited classes with you, where I observed teaching and learning and looked at pupils' work. I also heard pupils from Year 2 and Year 6 read.

I spoke with parents at the start of the school day. I took account of 191 responses to Parent View, the Ofsted online questionnaire, including free-text responses, and one handwritten letter from a parent. I looked at a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan, teachers' performance management arrangements and pupils' personal education plans. I also evaluated safeguarding procedures, including policies to keep pupils safe, safeguarding checks and attendance information. I undertook a review of the school's website.