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Mrs Sarah Johnson
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Johnson

Short inspection of Alexandra Park Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 27 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 February 2014.

This school continues to be good.

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

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in certain areas. This may indicate that the school is improving towards being outstanding. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

You have whole-heartedly embraced the school's vision, 'care, aspire, achieve'. These core values are at the centre of everything that you do. The care and support that pupils receive are leaders' highest priority. You have led by example to create a welcoming, caring and inclusive school, where staff and pupils thrive. Pupils are equally committed to ensuring that the school's core values are part of daily life. Pupils explained to me how staff train them to be 'restorative ambassadors'. These ambassadors are keen to support their peers and remedy any minor disagreements between pupils. They encourage their fellow pupils to 'care for each other'.

Alongside the deputy headteacher, you have created an aspirational and ambitious culture. Pupils and staff work together to succeed. Collectively, they overcome barriers to pupils' learning as a matter of routine. Parents and carers are particularly positive about the quality of education that the school provides. Parents praise the 'unfaltering enthusiasm' of the staff and the high-quality, well-rounded education

that their children receive.

You and the leadership team provide the staff with a clear vision. Leaders' actions to improve teaching are informed by their own educational research. Leaders adopt methods already proven to be successful. A reflective team of enthusiastic and committed staff engages in an ongoing cycle to review and refine their practice. This approach, alongside a wealth of training, is securing exponential improvements to the quality of teaching. As a result, pupils make excellent progress. This is particularly the case in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Governors are equally committed to the core values of the school. They demonstrate an acute understanding of the barriers to learning that pupils at the school face. Governors are committed to ensuring that pupils receive the help and support they need to excel. The governing body brings to their role knowledge from a range of sectors. This allows governors to ask challenging questions of leaders. Governors have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas to develop further. This has contributed towards the trajectory of ongoing improvement seen since the previous inspection.

You have successfully addressed the areas that inspectors identified at the last inspection. Considerable improvements in the quality of teaching have ensured that the progress pupils make is as strong as in some of the best schools in the country. This is particularly the case in reading, writing and mathematics. You have an accurate and incisive view of the school. You acknowledge that the attendance of some pupils could be better. You have already acted to strengthen the pastoral team to remedy this. You are also keen to develop further teachers' use of assessment information to ensure that pupils make even better progress across the wider curriculum.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You have created a school community that is alert to the risks that pupils may face. The system to check that adults at the school are suitable to work with children is secure. Governors ensure that this system is robust. Staff receive regular safeguarding training. Staff understand the procedures they must follow if they have concerns about a pupil.

When necessary, leaders work with other agencies to ensure that pupils receive appropriate support. Leaders' work with external agencies to support pupils and their families is exemplary. Records of their work with these agencies are meticulously organised.

Parents and staff are confident that pupils are safe at school. Pupils explained to me how they feel safe and happy at school. Through the curriculum, pupils learn about how to keep themselves safe, including online. Older pupils also learn about the basics of first-aid training. Pupils report that bullying is not tolerated and teachers

deal effectively with any rare incidents. Pupils also demonstrate an understanding of different faiths, such as Islam and Christianity. Pupils show respect and tolerance towards different backgrounds and families.

Inspection findings

- I was interested to know about the behaviour of pupils at the school. This is because, in the past, the proportion of pupils excluded for a fixed period has been above the national average. The school's inclusive ethos means that an increasing proportion of pupils who join the school have complex needs. Leaders ensure that these pupils receive the care and support that they need to manage better their own behaviour. You showed me examples where help and support from staff is securing substantial improvements in pupils' behaviour. As a result, the proportion of pupils excluded for a fixed period has reduced.
- Another aspect of the inspection focused on pupils' rates of attendance. This is because, in the past, rates of absence for disadvantaged pupils and those pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities have been above the national average. You recognise that there are increasing numbers of pupils at the school who require extra support with their attendance. You have responded swiftly by strengthening the pastoral team. Staff monitor pupils' attendance closely. This allows them to identify quickly those pupils whose attendance is a concern. Working effectively alongside other agencies, staff provide tailored support for these pupils and their families. As a result, the attendance of all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, is improving. Nonetheless, leaders remain committed to improving further pupils' attendance.
- I was interested to know whether the curriculum was broad and balanced. Pupils explained to me about the plentiful opportunities that the curriculum offers. Pupils develop culturally through their learning in the arts. For example, in Year 4, pupils learned about manga art, a Japanese style developed in the late 19th century. Similarly, in Year 2, pupils created their own aboriginal art symbols. Pupils in Year 6 spoke with enthusiasm about their understanding of light and shadow in science. In personal, social and health education, pupils in Year 5 wrote articulate responses about the negative effects of homophobia. Pupils in Year 3 explained to me how they enjoyed learning in history about the Stone Age.
- The leadership team continues to strengthen the quality of teaching across the wider curriculum. Teams of staff are accountable for securing improvements in teaching in individual subjects. Staff base their strategies for improving teaching upon firm evidence. For example, a group of staff is implementing a different approach to the teaching of history and geography. This approach has already proven to be successful in mathematics. Leaders have also enabled key stage 2 pupils to learn Spanish from a subject specialist. Nonetheless, the leadership team acknowledges that teachers' use of assessment information to plan learning across the wider curriculum could be sharper. On occasion, across the wider curriculum, teachers do not plan learning that allows some pupils to make consistently strong progress.

- I was interested in how effective leaders' use of additional funding is in promoting disadvantaged pupils' progress. At key stage 2, the progress made by disadvantaged pupils is among the strongest in the country. For example, for the last two years, in mathematics, the progress made by disadvantaged pupils in the school has been in the top 10% of primary schools nationally.
- Throughout the early years and in key stage 1, leaders track the progress of all pupils, including the progress made by disadvantaged pupils. This allows them to identify quickly those pupils who fall behind. Staff provide personalised help and support for these pupils. Staff take an informed approach to selecting the most appropriate strategies. Leaders regularly review the effect of extra support on pupils' progress and, where necessary, they refine and amend their approach. This allows disadvantaged pupils to make strong progress, particularly in reading, writing and mathematics.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they strengthen further their approach to improving pupils' attendance, particularly that of disadvantaged pupils
- teachers sharpen their use of accurate assessment information across the wider curriculum to ensure that learning allows pupils to make the same progress as they do in reading, writing and mathematics.

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

Yours sincerely

Emma Gregory
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you and other senior leaders, some teachers and a group of pupils. Leaders accompanied me on visits to classes, where I observed teaching and learning across subjects. I looked at work produced by key stage 2 pupils across the wider curriculum. I also looked at key stage 1 pupils' work in mathematics. I spoke with parents at the beginning of the school day. I also spoke with the school improvement adviser from the local authority and six members of the governing body.

I examined a range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding,

governance and leaders' analyses of attendance information. I considered the school improvement plan and leaders' self-evaluation. I also checked the contents of the school's website. I considered responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and responses to Ofsted's staff survey. I also took into account responses to Ofsted's pupils' survey and written responses from parents to Ofsted's free-text facility.