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Miss Clare Thomas
Headteacher
Holden Lane Primary School
Ralph Drive
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Dear Miss Thomas

Short inspection of Holden Lane Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 19 April 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 your school was judged to be good in May 2013.

This school continues to be good.

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

A new school was built in 2015 but it is not yet complete. The outdoor space is not finished or fit for purpose, some building issues have only recently been resolved and you are still waiting for furniture so that some parts of the school can become fully functional. Although this has presented challenges, you and governors are relentless in pursuing what still needs to be done. You have high expectations for your pupils. You want the very best for them and nothing less will do.

You have successfully addressed the areas for improvement from the last inspection. For example, you have ensured that monitoring and evaluation are rigorous. You are clear about areas for improvement and have taken positive steps to address them. You track pupils' progress carefully and ensure that pupils receive the support that they need to do the very best that they can. Pupils are now encouraged to work more independently. They check their own work before going to the teacher and are challenged to think harder for themselves, especially in mathematics. Teaching and learning are a high priority and you address any areas of underperformance promptly. Consequently, pupils are taught well and make good progress, especially in writing and mathematics.

Quite rightly, pupils are very proud of their school. They work hard and demonstrate very positive attitudes to learning. They take a pride in their work and

want to do well. The relationships between staff and pupils and between pupils themselves are strong. Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility and contribute to school life. For example, Year 6 pupils chose their own uniform and they each have a role in school. There is a high level of respect. Pupils say they feel safe and know who to go to if they need help and support. They play together well and conduct themselves well around school.

You and your staff are well regarded by parents and carers. The parents spoken to during the inspection praised the commitment and support of staff, especially for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities.

You have made effective use of support from the local authority and partnership schools to develop leaders and improve teaching and learning, especially in reading and writing.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding and arrangements are fit for purpose. There are secure and thorough systems in place for the recruitment of staff. Records are well organised and training is kept up to date. Safeguarding is a high priority and a regular agenda item at all meetings, so that vulnerable pupils are always considered. You demonstrate a high level of care for your pupils. The school knows its families very well and provides the right level of support. There are strong relationships and an established trust and respect between the school and the local community.

Pupils demonstrate a good awareness of how to keep themselves safe, including outside of school. Curriculum work for older pupils on 'values versus violence' helped them to understand how to be safe on the streets.

Inspection findings

- Historically, pupils' attendance has been below national figures. Persistent absence, particularly for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, has been high. Leaders have taken effective action to improve attendance. Leaders track attendance carefully and employ additional support from an education welfare officer. Incentives are in place to promote good attendance and prompt action is taken to address issues of poor attendance. As a result, current attendance figures show that overall attendance and persistent absence are now improving closer to the national average than previously.
- Since the last inspection, governors are more actively involved in the work of the school. They are very committed and have a good knowledge of the local context and challenges that the school faces. Through the development of the strategic overview committee, they now demonstrate a better understanding of performance data and assessment information and the strengths and weaknesses of the school. However, they do not have a clear strategic overview of all aspects of the school, for example how the physical education (PE) and sports premium has been spent or its impact.

- Leaders rightly recognise that reading is an area for development. Pupils' progress and attainment in reading have not been as strong as in writing and mathematics. Leaders have adopted effective strategies to improve pupils' reading and comprehension skills, for example the introduction of rich texts and a partnership reading project with parents. As a result of leaders' actions, pupils are currently making good progress in reading. Pupils are developing their use and understanding of vocabulary well. They can describe and explain meaning in text but have not yet developed some higher-order inference skills such as explaining the intentions of the author's use of vocabulary in writing.
- In 2017, at the end of key stage 2, pupils achieved below the national average at the higher standard in all subjects. Reading and writing were also below national figures at the higher standard in 2016. In lessons, teachers have high expectations and generally challenge pupils well, especially in mathematics. The most able pupils write well-structured narrative and are encouraged to apply a range of vocabulary and grammatical features in their writing. Leaders recognise that they do not track the progress and attainment of the most able pupils sharply enough.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- governors build on their current good practice to develop a more strategic overview of the use and impact of additional funding
- teachers further develop pupils' comprehension skills to improve progress and attainment in reading
- the progress and attainment of the most able pupils is tracked carefully to ensure that more pupils achieve a higher standard 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 Stoke-on-Trent. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Sue Cameron
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, the deputy headteacher (who is also the leader for English), the inclusion leader and the school business manager. I met with a representative of the local authority, the chair and vice-chair of the governing body and the health and safety governor. I spoke to parents at the beginning of the school day and considered two free-text responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey. There were four responses to Parent View, too few to create

a report. I also considered 22 responses to the staff survey. There were no responses to the pupil survey. However, I spoke to pupils formally and informally during the day. I scrutinised a range of school documentation, including the single central record, safeguarding records, your school self-evaluation document and school improvement plan, and attendance and assessment information. I visited all classrooms with you and looked at pupils' work, especially in key stage 2. I observed pupils' behaviour throughout the day.