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Mr Stephen Holden
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Dear Mr Holden

Short inspection of Tottington Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 24 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 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. Since your permanent deputy headteacher left for a seconded role as headteacher in another school two years ago, you have skilfully distributed responsibilities for leadership among your acting deputy headteacher and your team of middle leaders. These middle leaders have contributed well to sustaining the good quality of education the school provides. You are now finally in a position to recruit a permanent deputy headteacher, which will bring even greater stability to your leadership team.

You are a highly effective and inspirational headteacher who demonstrates energy and utter commitment to providing the best possible education for your pupils. Parents and carers were almost unanimous in their positive responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, posting comments describing the school as 'absolutely excellent', 'welcoming' and 'fun'. Pupils enjoy all aspects of school life, from the way teachers expect them to do their best in their work to the variety of clubs and educational trips that effectively support their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

You have successfully addressed the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection report.

You have increased pupils' progress in writing by providing them with many opportunities to use their writing skills in other subjects, such as history and art. For

example, current pupils in Year 2 write simply about their feelings and responses to different examples of paintings. The most recently published assessment information shows that the proportion of pupils who reached the expected standard or better in writing by the end of key stage 2 in 2017 was above the national average, although progress was less strong than in reading and in mathematics. You acknowledge that your next step is to ensure that more of the most able pupils achieve greater depth in writing to secure even stronger progress. You also recognise that there are occasions when teachers do not provide the most able with challenging enough work when writing in other subjects.

The quality of leadership and management has improved. You have ensured that subject leaders now have a secure overview of standards in their subject. Since the last inspection you have given them greater responsibility for carrying out regular checks on the quality of teaching and learning. These include scrutiny of pupils' work and analysis of assessment information. Subject leaders then report strengths and areas for development to staff and ensure that teachers implement suggested improvements. They also regularly report to governors on standards. The overall effect of these actions is that pupils' achievement is much improved across a range of subjects, especially English and mathematics.

You have been particularly successful in accelerating pupils' progress in reading and in mathematics. Assessment information for 2017 shows that pupils made excellent progress by the end of Year 6 and evidence in books shows that current pupils make similar progress. You have secured these improvements by rigorously holding teachers to account through, for example, regular meetings to discuss pupils' progress. You also provide teachers with actions for improvement, following your frequent checks on the quality of teaching. These actions are also improving pupils' progress in key stage 1 and you acknowledge that you now need to increase the proportion of these pupils who achieve greater depth in reading, in writing and in mathematics.

You are always keen to find ways of further improving the quality of teaching and learning. You have recently adopted a new approach to teaching mathematics, for example, which involves setting more focused learning objectives for pupils, which are closely linked to their ability. This enables teachers to carry out more accurate assessment of pupils' understanding and intervene more promptly when required. Assessment information and evidence in books show that this strategy makes a substantial contribution to the rapid progress that current pupils make in mathematics.

Governors provide effective support and challenge for school leaders. They ask searching questions about a wide range of matters, such as staffing costs and pupils' progress. They are knowledgeable about the school's strengths and areas for development and are ambitious for further improvement.

I spoke with members of staff who are not senior leaders, as well as analysing their responses to the online staff survey. They enjoy working at the school and are very positive about, for example, the quality and effectiveness of the training they

receive.

The local authority and the adviser commissioned on its behalf have an accurate view of the school's priorities. They provide an appropriate level of support that matches their confidence in your leadership of the school.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. The designated safeguarding lead makes prompt referrals when necessary to appropriate agencies, such as children's services. The school's record of required checks on members of staff is comprehensive and complies with government guidance.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Your staff have a secure understanding of safeguarding processes because they have undertaken effective training. They know how to recognise various signs of abuse. Pupils feel safe in the school because adults give them the information they need to stay safe. They know, for example, that they should not share personal information when they are using the internet.

Governors have a secure overview of safeguarding procedures. They receive regular reports from senior leaders and a dedicated safeguarding governor has frequent meetings with the designated person responsible for safeguarding in the school. Governors are aware that there is an effective system in place for monitoring and filtering the internet in school.

Leaders and governors have successfully reduced rates of absence and persistent absence so that they are now below the national average. You have introduced a wide range of effective strategies to achieve this outcome. These include providing pupils with rewards for high attendance and ensuring that your learning mentor liaises closely with parents of children who have low attendance to secure improvement. You commission the services of the local authority's educational welfare officer to support you in this work.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the day, we agreed a number of key lines of enquiry, which I explored during my visit. I have already reported on how successfully you have addressed the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. I have also written about the effectiveness of safeguarding and your work to improve pupils' rates of attendance.
- Another key line of enquiry concerned the steps you have taken to ensure that pupils' progress in writing by the end of key stage 2 is closer to their progress in reading and mathematics. You have introduced a range of strategies to improve pupils' progress in writing. These include carefully structured lessons to teach pupils the skills of writing. These are followed up with regular opportunities for pupils to write without support and at length. You have also trained staff so that

they have a better understanding of the characteristics of writing of greater depth. Evidence from books shows that most pupils develop their writing skills effectively, with less-able pupils in Year 6, for example, able to write sentences with interesting structures and an engaging style, such as, 'Suddenly, the heavens opened.' The school's own assessment information shows that a high proportion of pupils in Year 6 is on track to attain the expected standard in writing this year. However, the proportion on track to achieve greater depth is still hovering just below the national average.

- The next focus for the inspection was the achievement of current disadvantaged pupils in English and mathematics. You have put in place a variety of strategies to support disadvantaged pupils. These include additional work for individuals and small groups to help them to overcome misconceptions in English or mathematics. You also provide activities, such as sessions in play therapy, for pupils who have emotional needs and your learning mentor is available to lend support if required. Across almost all year groups, the school's assessment information shows that most disadvantaged pupils make progress that is improving towards or is similar to other pupils nationally, using figures for Year 2 and Year 6 for comparison. Samples of pupils' work confirm this picture.
- My next line of enquiry concerned how well leaders challenge the most able pupils in English and mathematics, especially in key stage 1. Leaders are aware of the need to increase the number of pupils working at a higher standard and have included this as a key area in their plans for school improvement. An analysis of workbooks showed that, for the most part, teachers now set work that gives pupils more opportunities to think more deeply. For example, in mathematics in Year 2, most-able pupils can divide odd numbers by 2 and recognise there is a remainder. However, you accept the need to persist with your work in this area, as the emphasis on providing challenging tasks has not yet translated into higher proportions of pupils achieving greater depth.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to work to secure stronger progress in writing, so that more pupils reach greater depth by the end of key stage 2
- they build on the changes made to increase the proportion of pupils in key stage 1 who achieve greater depth in reading, in writing and in 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 Bury. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Mark Quinn
Her Majesty's Inspector
Information about the inspection

With you, I carried out short visits to the early years and all year groups in key stage 1 and key stage 2. I scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation summary, action plans for school improvement, minutes of meetings of the governing body and records connected with the safeguarding of children. I held discussions with you, other members of staff, governors and pupils. I had a discussion with the school improvement adviser working on behalf of the local authority. I analysed pupils' work and the school's own assessment information. I evaluated 73 responses received through Parent View, Ofsted's online survey. I also evaluated 27 responses to the staff survey and 46 responses to the pupil survey.