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Mr Chris Stewart
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Stewart

Short inspection of Hallam Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 9 May 2018 with Diane Reynard, Ofsted Inspector, 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 predecessor school was judged to be good in September 2013.

This school continues to be good.

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

You are an inspirational headteacher who leads by example. You have a drive to ensure that the school is the best it can possibly be. You have galvanised a staff team after a period of instability. Your school is a happy place to come to work and learn. Staff are overwhelmingly positive about the school and morale is high. You, along with senior leaders, have done a lot to ensure the well-being of staff. A 'well-being committee', for example, is used to organise staff events, such as rounders matches, as well as to seek staff views about school policies and procedures. Because of the work of this committee, some policies have been revised, for example the marking policy. One member of staff informed inspectors that: 'The staffroom is now packed with laughter and fun and we enjoy each other's company.'

Pupils also really enjoy coming to school and behave extremely well. Pupils are confident learners. They approach learning with a real energy and drive to succeed. They want to be the best they can be. Pupils are eloquent and show immense pride in their school. On several occasions, pupils thanked inspectors for visiting their school. Pupils show care for each other and they respect all school staff. They say that it is the enthusiasm of the staff that motivates them to learn. 'Our teachers are really creative and enjoy sport; they are our role models. They make us want to learn,' reflects a typical pupil comment.

Pupils' understanding of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength. Pupils have a deep understanding of different religions and can reflect on the different

visitors to school and visits they have been on. They talk with great maturity about differences in religions and cultures, including within their school, commenting for example that: 'All the pupils are equals; they aren't different at all.'

Since the most recent inspection before the school converted to an academy, the school has worked incredibly hard to build links with families. This has had a positive impact on improving the attendance of both disadvantaged pupils and those from the traveller community. Parents' views of the school are now overwhelmingly positive. One parent said, 'school was utterly transformational for my child'. Another said: 'There is a strong drive to allow children to forge memories and allow pupils to be individuals – this school needed a Chris [headteacher].'

In all key stages, pupils achieve well in this school. Most children enter school in Reception with levels of skill, knowledge and understanding similar to that of children of that age. Early years provision is good and so children make a strong start to learning in school. Teachers ensure that children are challenged and inspired to learn through exciting learning opportunities. During this inspection, for example, children were looking closely at different types of fish, using real fish. They examined cod, plaice, octopus and rainbow trout. Teachers used effective questioning to develop children's vocabulary while encouraging them to sort the fish using length, visual features and their own ideas. Children were totally engrossed in their learning. Children make good progress from their starting points in the early years and most are ready for learning in Year 1.

In recent years, standards of attainment by the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics have been well above average. Similarly, by the end of Year 6, a well-above average proportion of pupils reach the expected standard. Pupils are very well prepared for secondary school. This achievement reflects the good, and sometimes outstanding, quality of teaching in the school.

School leaders continue to drive school improvement successfully forward at a brisk pace. In 2017, for example, standards at the end of key stage 1 and 2 in 2017 were even higher than in 2016. You are not complacent, however. You know that, as some staff are new to the school, making sure that they receive coaching and support so that approaches to teaching, learning and assessment are consistent across the school is now an important next step. Work is already underway to do this. Similarly, while the subject knowledge of teachers is very strong, it is not as strong among some teaching assistants. These staff do not have as much of an impact on pupils' learning as a result.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Leaders and governors are diligent in all matters relating to safeguarding and take their responsibilities very seriously. They make sure that all recruitment checks are carried out on the suitability of staff and keep up to date with safeguarding regulations. All staff have received training, for example on the 'Prevent' duty, so that they know how to recognise and report causes for concern. Records show that leaders take prompt and effective action to ensure that pupils receive the support they need.

Pupils know how to keep themselves safe. They talk confidently about keeping safe

online. Pupils could share their motto about sending texts: 'Never send a text that you wouldn't have written on your t-shirt.' They also know about road safety and stranger danger. Some pupils are appointed as Junior Road Safety Officers. They model good road safety practice through assemblies and designing posters. They even give out pretend parking tickets to adults who have parked dangerously on the road outside the school.

The school manages the difficult site extremely well to ensure that children are kept safe. Adults are on duty on gates that cross a public footpath that ensures pupils move safely around the site.

This is a school of choice. A quarter of pupils come from out of local catchment, with some pupils travelling some distance to attend. Pupils are eager to come to school. Attendance is above average and persistent absence is low. The school has reduced the number of disadvantaged pupils who are persistently absent. No disadvantaged pupil is now persistently absent.

Inspection findings

- At the start of my visit, we agreed a number of key lines of enquiry for the inspection. First, I looked at the quality of phonics teaching, especially how the school helps pupils who do not reach the standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check to catch up by the end of Year 2. Inspection evidence confirms that phonics teaching across the school is strong. Teachers have a good understanding of their pupils' needs. While the work is differentiated, it is challenging for every group of pupils. This ensures that pupils make good progress from their individual starting points. Pupils catch up quickly as they are supported effectively in Year 2. For a very small number of pupils, phonics continues to be taught in Year 3.
- I also looked at whether pupils are making good progress from their often high-attaining starting points when they start Year 3. Published data of pupils in Year 6 in 2017, for example, indicated that pupils' progress in writing and mathematics was average, although it was above average in reading. We discussed how it can be difficult for data to show pupils' good progress because of their high prior attainment. However, inspection evidence confirms that pupils in key stage 2 are making good progress, especially in reading and writing.
- Pupils are making good progress as a result of good teaching. Work in pupils' books shows that work is carefully planned and pupils of all abilities are challenged effectively. In mathematics, pupils are methodical and think carefully about how to solve challenging problems. Progress in mathematics is improving. Pupils thrive because they are given challenge. They can work for a sustained period, showing resilience and determination. Although teachers' subject knowledge is very strong, the subject knowledge of some teaching assistants is not as strong as it could be. This means that, sometimes, pupils' misconceptions are not identified and this hampers their progress.
- As standards by the end of Year 6 in reading, writing and mathematics are consistently high, I wanted to see how well pupils achieve in other curriculum areas. The curriculum is broad, balanced, motivating and really interesting. Pupils talk with enthusiasm about what they are learning. They particularly relish learning through topics. Recent topics have included 'Is American life really like it is in the movies?', 'How European are we?'

and 'Was the Stone Age really like the Flintstones?' Pupils, and their parents, are very involved in planning topic-related learning. Topic work is inspiring and encourages deep links to be made throughout the curriculum areas. Investigations that pupils undertake ensure that their scientific skills, for example, are developed well in all year groups. Furthermore, opportunities for pupils to use and apply their literacy and numeracy skills are plentiful and contribute to the high standards pupils reach in English and mathematics. You are driven to enliven the curriculum even further, and so provision for outdoor learning is currently being developed. Pupils have recently designed a school 'amphitheatre', which they hope to build in future.

- A high priority is given to sport within the wider curriculum. All the pupils who spoke to me have represented the school in a competitive sporting activity. The school's ambition is that 85% of pupils will do this by the end of the year. Pupils know that taking part in physical exercise will help to keep them healthy. Although pupils also know about how to eat healthily, some still choose to eat sweets and cakes at playtimes, which is against the school's policy.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- continue to coach and support new staff to ensure that there is a consistent approach to teaching, learning and assessment
- develop the subject knowledge of support staff to ensure that they have a positive impact on learning
- continue to promote healthy eating choices.

I am copying this letter to the chief executive officer and the executive headteacher of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Sheffield. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Eve Morris
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, assistant headteachers and other leaders, including the special educational needs coordinator; a group of pupils; governors; and the executive headteacher of the multi-academy trust. We evaluated documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, the school development plan, information about pupils' progress, minutes of governing body meetings, behaviour and attendance records, and information about safeguarding. I considered the 338 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I met with a group of pupils from a range of year groups and

listened to some pupils read. You and I visited every classroom together to observe teaching and learning and to scrutinise pupils' work in their books.