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Mr D Armer  
Headteacher  
Sutton Green Primary School  
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Dear Mr Armer

### **Short inspection of Sutton Green Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 4 July 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 November 2013.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

Leaders have not been swift enough in their actions to tackle the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection, which included developing detailed plans for improvement, making rigorous checks on teaching and sharing effective practice. There has been a decline in pupils' achievement in mathematics, particularly in key stage 2. The majority of children reach a good level of development at the end of Reception. The proportion of pupils who reach the expected standard in the phonics screening check in Year 1 has remained below the national average for the past three years. This hinders the progress that pupils make in both reading and writing. The proportion of pupils who reach the standard expected in these subjects by the end of key stage 1 is below the national average.

The positive impact that you have made since your recent appointment at the start of the academic year has reinvigorated staff and governors. You have ignited a new passion for learning in pupils. You are well supported by your leadership team and embody the motto of the school: 'Together helping every child.'

You have accurately identified the key priorities for improvement, based on a detailed analysis of assessment information. You are making changes to the way that staff teach mathematics and you have ensured that staff have received

effective training to improve their practice. Staff appreciate opportunities to work with other colleagues, including in other schools, sharing good practice and checking that their judgements about pupils' achievements are correct. A culture of open and professional dialogue is developing. Leaders work cooperatively with the local authority to bring about the changes that are beginning to improve outcomes for pupils. However, some teaching is still not effective enough. During the inspection, we considered areas where further work is required to support the school's improvement. It is too soon to measure the impact of the changes that you have made as many of the strategies in place are too recent to have influenced outcomes for all pupils.

You have established an open and productive relationship with governors. Regular training gives them confidence in considering information that they receive from leaders, by visiting the school and in talking to pupils about their work. Governors use their skills, knowledge and expertise to hold leaders to account. They have high expectations and ensure that the actions that leaders take are leading to improving outcomes for pupils.

Parents and carers spoken with during the inspection, and those who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, were extremely positive about the school. All would recommend it. Typical comments were, 'It's a happy school. Staff are very approachable and can't do enough for the children.' Workshops for parents on how you teach reading are well attended and ensure that parents are able to help their children at home. Parents of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities praised highly the help and care that they receive as a family.

Pupils are polite and well mannered. They work cooperatively. Older pupils take their responsibilities seriously as members of committees and as role models for the younger pupils. Pupils enjoy the many clubs that they can attend, for example netball, STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) club and nature club. Pupils who spoke with me were particularly reflective about the recent 'find a solution to the pollution' project. They are determined to recycle as much as they can to protect sea life. They feel listened to and valued. They are proud of their school. Pupils who spoke with me commented, 'The best thing about our school is when we do things together.'

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are effective and are understood by staff. Staff are kept up to date on relevant safeguarding issues. High-quality training enables them to identify quickly any vulnerable pupils. Leaders work very effectively with other agencies and charities. They are very thorough in ensuring that pupils and families receive appropriate guidance and support.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe through a variety of activities, including assemblies and e-safety sessions. They said that they feel safe at school and know that there is an adult in school that they can talk with should they have concerns or

worries. Pupils understand the different forms that bullying can take. They confidently said that teachers would deal quickly with any incidents of bullying should they occur.

## **Inspection findings**

- During the inspection, we discussed several key lines of enquiry. The first was about attendance. Staff know families extremely well and work effectively to ensure that pupils are safe. You work closely with the most vulnerable families so that they have the help and guidance that they need. You stress the importance of attending school regularly, through a variety of media, including newsletters and the school's website. Leaders hold regular attendance meetings with parents when pupils' attendance is not good enough. You have introduced several incentives which are having a positive impact. Pupils' attendance and punctuality are improving, particularly in the case of pupils who are persistently absent from school. However, attendance levels remain below the national average, which hinders the progress of pupils who do not attend school regularly.
- We also discussed the behaviour of a small proportion of pupils that had led to some fixed-term exclusions. Detailed records clearly indicate that pupils who struggle to make the right choices about their behaviour are supported well and are safe when not attending school. Actions are put in place quickly. Staff work closely with parents, carers and other agencies to ensure that pupils receive the guidance and help that they need. Incidents of inappropriate behaviour this academic year have reduced considerably. Pupils who spoke with me commented on the positive impact that the new behaviour system has had on improving behaviour, especially during playtimes. No inappropriate behaviour was seen during the inspection.
- I was interested to see how phonics is taught. Inconsistencies in teachers' subject knowledge hinders the progress that pupils make. Teachers do not use phonics assessment information to identify gaps in pupils' learning. Therefore, activities to develop pupils' knowledge of phonics do not accurately meet the needs of the majority of pupils, nor do they challenge pupils appropriately. Teachers do not routinely provide pupils with books to read that match their knowledge of phonics, because the books often have vocabulary that is too challenging. Pupils struggle to decode the words that they are reading, which hinders their fluency and understanding. Recent training for staff has improved their practice. Leaders now check that phonics is taught effectively. They are beginning to tackle the inconsistencies that they have identified in how it is taught. However, improvements have not been swift enough to meet the needs of some pupils. The proportion of pupils who reach the expected standard in the phonics screening check remains below the national average.
- We discussed how the pupil premium funding is used to support disadvantaged pupils, particularly in key stage 1. Leaders have accurately identified the barriers to such pupils' learning. Skilled staff work with pupils in small groups or individually to develop the social and emotional skills of this group. The attitudes to learning of disadvantaged pupils are improving. Leaders are beginning to use assessment information in mathematics to identify the gaps in their learning

accurately. Staff ensure that pupils receive the help that they need to catch up quickly. However, assessment information is not used as effectively in reading and writing. Activities do not routinely match the needs of disadvantaged pupils accurately. This group is not reaching the standards expected for other pupils of a similar age nationally at the end of Year 2.

- Next, we discussed the actions taken in Reception to ensure that pupils were ready for Year 1. Pupils join the school from several local nurseries. Most children have skills and knowledge below those typical of children of a similar age nationally. Pupils settle quickly because of the well-thought-through activities in the summer term. Leaders' good subject knowledge enables them to use assessments accurately to identify the next steps in children's learning. Leaders work with other colleagues to check the accuracy of their judgements. Parents contribute regularly to the assessment information that leaders gather. Activities are carefully crafted to ignite children's imaginations and challenge them appropriately. Children who are struggling are helped to catch up quickly. The high proportion of children who have SEN and/or disabilities are supported extremely well by specially trained staff. Staff use questions skilfully to encourage children to refine their ideas, particularly when writing. This includes using Makaton and British Sign Language. Children thrive in a bright and well-resourced environment. The majority of pupils reach a good level of development by the end of Reception.
- Finally, we looked at the actions you have taken to improve outcomes in mathematics. Leaders carried out a detailed analysis of assessment information and of the quality of pupils' work. This information highlighted significant discrepancies in the teaching of mathematics. You have taken decisive action. Staff receive training to improve their teaching and develop their confidence. Resources help pupils to solve calculations accurately. Assessment is effective in identifying pupils who are struggling. They are quickly given the help that they need. Pupils have the opportunity to apply their mathematical skills to solve problems and explain the reason for their answers. They enjoy the challenges that they are given and are proud of their achievements. Pupils who spoke to me said, 'I used to struggle with maths but I'm able to do it now.' It is too soon to measure the full impact of the recent strategies that you have introduced.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to improve attendance for pupils, including those who are persistently absent from school
- phonics is taught consistently well in key stage 1, enabling pupils to apply their phonics knowledge accurately in their reading and writing
- they embed the changes made to mathematics teaching to ensure consistency and improve outcomes for pupils
- they embed the improvements to how teachers use assessment information so that learning tasks accurately match the needs of pupils and pupils make the

progress that they should.

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

Yours sincerely

Amanda Stringer

**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During this inspection, I met with you, other members of the leadership team and staff. I also spoke with three members of the governing body and had a phone conversation with a representative of the local authority. I visited classrooms with you, where I had the opportunity to speak with pupils and look at their work. I met with a group of pupils formally during the day and I spoke with several parents at the start of the school day. I took account of 22 responses to the staff questionnaire. I also considered 24 free-text comments from parents and the 36 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents. I scrutinised pupils' assessment information and a range of documentation, including the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding procedures and practices.