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Mr Mark Roberts  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Roberts

### **Short inspection of Limehurst Community Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 7 November 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 March 2015.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

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

Limehurst is a welcoming, friendly and purposeful school, which is situated in the heart of a well-established community. Both you and the staff have an in-depth understanding of the educational, social and emotional needs of pupils. You have developed highly effective partnerships to ensure that the school is improving steadily towards meeting its central aim, which is to 'encourage all pupils to reach their true potential and promote the skills required for lifelong learning'.

As headteacher, you have a thorough understanding of the school's strengths, as well as what needs to be done to further improve. You succinctly analyse and interpret information on pupils' performance. Based on your analysis, you work closely with the associate headteacher and senior leaders to devise plans to tackle any areas which require attention. This was exemplified recently in your success in improving pupils' reading skills, the evidence of which was in Year 6 pupils' much-improved performance in reading at the end of key stage 2 in 2018. Pupils who read for me did so with fluency, confidence and determination. Pupils were eager to tell me about their many opportunities to read, evidence of which is found in their reading records.

You have a skilled and experienced team of governors, many of whom are long standing. They know the school exceptionally well and have a precise understanding of the areas for development. Governors know that improving pupils' achievement in writing remains a priority. They informed me that the performance of disadvantaged

pupils is 'always on the agenda'. Governors come into school to talk with pupils about their learning. Their good knowledge, full understanding of their responsibilities and familiarity with the school help them to challenge and support the school in equal measure.

Staff morale is high. All those who completed the inspection questionnaire are of the view that the school has improved since the previous inspection. Similarly, all say pupils are safe and well behaved. Staff are of the view that managers are considerate of their well-being. They are keen to help the school move forward onto its next stage of development.

The staff are of the view that the school encourages calm and orderly conduct. This is certainly what I experienced when moving around the school and observing lessons. Pupils are welcoming and well mannered. Those who spoke with me said that behaviour is almost always good and bullying rarely, if ever, happens. Pupils are proud ambassadors for the school and enjoy learning and taking advantage of the many extra-curricular activities available, including film, art, gymnastics and gardening clubs.

Most parents and carers are highly positive about all aspects of the school. Almost all those who completed Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, would recommend the school. Parents are of the view that their children are happy, safe and making good progress. Those who submitted text messages during the inspection typically commented that, 'staff are very approachable' and 'my child looks forward to going to school and is developing well'.

Governors spoke knowledgeably about the work you have done to improve the effectiveness of middle leaders, an area for improvement from the previous inspection. Middle leaders, most of whom are subject specialists and/or leaders of 'phases', such as the early years and key stage 2, are highly effective in their roles. They form a cohesive team and play a central part in improving the quality of teaching and learning.

At the time of the last inspection you were also asked to ensure that the most able pupils are sufficiently challenged, to ensure that they achieve to the best of their ability. Your work in this area has produced mixed fortunes. For example, pupils' progress at the end of Year 6 in 2017, including that of disadvantaged pupils, was in the top 20% of all schools nationally in writing and mathematics. However, the proportion that attained at the higher standard was below average in all subjects. While unvalidated data for 2018 shows there have been good gains on the previous year, especially in reading and mathematics, improving pupils' writing, including in key stage 1, and helping pupils to attain highly remain priorities for the school.

### **Safeguarding is effective**

- Leaders have ensured the safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. All members of the school community are exceptionally vigilant when it comes to safeguarding. Designated safeguarding leaders are trained to a high standard. Governors and staff ensure that their training is up to date and that they are well

informed about new developments in relation to the welfare and protection of children.

- The safeguarding policy is current and available on the school's website. Staff are familiar with the school's policies and government guidelines, including the latest guidance on keeping children safe in education. All staff and governors have had 'Prevent' duty training, which is in keeping with the government's agenda to counter terrorism and radicalisation. Checks on staff are rigorous and up to date. Records show that all are suitable to work with children.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe. Visitors help to develop their appreciation of the potential dangers and risks associated with fires and road traffic. Pupils know how to maintain their safety when using the internet and social media. They are confident to report any concerns to adults, secure in the knowledge that such concerns will always be dealt with swiftly.

### **Inspection findings**

- The inspection focused on several key lines of enquiry, the first of which was the role of subject leaders in improving the quality of teaching and learning. This was an area for improvement identified at the time of the previous inspection. Subject leaders are trained well, knowledgeable about their subjects and form a highly cohesive team. Leaders are fully conversant with the school development plans and play a central role in improving teaching and pupils' achievement.
- Leaders regularly monitor the quality of teaching in their respective subjects and give advice to colleagues on how they can improve their practice. For example, good advice to staff in the Nursery and Reception classes has improved children's ability to infer from pictures and break up and sound out new words. Teachers' confidence in developing pupils' investigation skills in science has been enhanced, leading to more practical, hands-on experiences for pupils. Leaders know their subjects well and successfully adapt the good practice they observe in other schools to meet the needs of pupils in Limehurst.
- My next line of enquiry related to writing. Specifically, I wanted to establish how well developed pupils' writing skills are. I chose to focus on writing because pupils' performance in this subject in national tests dipped at the end of Year 6 in 2018. Together with senior leaders, you have made improving writing a whole-school priority. During the inspection I observed that teachers take a consistent approach to developing pupils' writing skills. Evidence of this is found in pupils' books, many of which include carefully crafted sentences containing accurate and interesting punctuation.
- Visiting 'Vikings', studies of the lives of well-known historical figures, such as Florence Nightingale, and events, including the sinking of the Titanic, have stimulated pupils' interests and generated an excitement about writing. This was evident in a Year 4 class, where pupils imagined life during the Mesolithic and Palaeolithic periods. In Year 6, pupils demonstrated their creativity when they wrote their own ending to a dramatic story about a girl on a lake. Pupils know that they can make their writing interesting by creating suspense, which they informed me could be generated through using 'description, dialogue and action'. While writing is

undoubtedly improving for all groups of pupils, some lack the necessary stamina and ability to write at length in various subjects.

- My third line of enquiry focused on your work to increase the proportion of high-attaining pupils. As indicated, this was because of the small proportion of pupils attaining at the higher standard in writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2. In addition, although improving, a below-average proportion of pupils attained at greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 1 in 2018.
- Together with subject leaders, you have devised several strategies aimed at challenging the most able pupils to achieve to their best. For example, pupils are encouraged to develop their calculation and problem-solving skills in the mathematics club. In addition, a range of small-group teaching activities are available to hone pupils' writing skills. Teachers also challenge pupils to tackle difficult books in a range of styles. However, there is more to do. Several pupils I spoke with indicated that work is sometimes too easy. In addition, pupils' English, mathematics and topic workbooks show that pupils of different abilities are sometimes given the same work. As a result, the most able do not always reach the high standards of which they are capable.
- My final line of enquiry related to pupils' attendance. This was because after three years of pupils' attendance moving closer to the national average, it dipped in 2018. You have ample evidence to explain this decline. One reason relates to the local authority's fair access programme, which requires all schools to enrol their share of pupils new to the country. Erratic attendance and pupils' return to their country of origin adversely impacted on attendance in 2018. With the support of the highly experienced attendance consultant, you have had to tackle absence due to other factors, such as holidays taken during term time.
- You have put in place a range of initiatives, all of which help to improve attendance. The consultant works closely with families to discourage absence and explain the relationship between regular attendance and good achievement. The celebration of good attendance, awards and rewards at the end of term and the academic year all help to place the matter of attendance firmly on the agenda for all members of the school community. As a result of your hard work, pupils' attendance has improved considerably this year and is just above average.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils are consistently challenged to achieve to their best, enabling a greater proportion to achieve the highest levels of learning in all subjects
- more opportunities are available for pupils to practise and refine their writing skills across the curriculum.

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

Yours sincerely

Lenford White  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with you and the associate headteacher. I also met with other members of the senior leadership team and subject leaders. I visited classes in key stages 1 and 2 with the associate headteacher. I held a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority and had a discussion with a random sample of pupils. I also listened to pupils read and held a meeting with the attendance consultant. I examined various documents, including English and mathematics action plans, plans for the use of pupil premium funding and data on pupils' performance. I also scrutinised a sample of pupils' work and looked at various policies, including those for behaviour, safeguarding and the curriculum.

I also considered 29 free-text messages and 25 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I looked at 31 responses to the staff questionnaire and considered your own surveys of parents' views.