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31 January 2019

Mr Alec Stephenson
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Dear Mr Stephenson

Short inspection of Fairfield Road Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 15 January 2019, 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 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You lead a happy and inclusive school where all are welcomed and encouraged to thrive. Pupils develop a love of learning. You inspire the whole school community to work collaboratively and with enthusiasm to live out the school's mission statement, 'Together everyone achieves more'. As a result, pupils achieve well, particularly in mathematics, in which pupils' achievement by the end of key stage 2 is outstanding. The vibrant curriculum planned by leaders places a strong focus on giving pupils valuable and broad life experiences, including visits to museums and different places of worship.

Leaders place a very high priority on staff training and have created a collaborative and vibrant learning community. You are strongly committed to developing the skilled staff as future school leaders. Staff have a very positive view of the school and appreciate the many opportunities they have for training and to share their expertise within school and with other schools in the local authority. Several leaders in the school have undertaken study at Masters level and used their research projects to develop teaching and learning, including in reading and in the early years. This has had a positive impact on raising standards. Across the school, pupils read quality and engaging texts, and this has developed their vocabulary and raised standards in reading. The proportion of pupils leaving the school with expected standards for age in reading, in 2018, was above the national average. Children make good progress in the early years and standards have improved.

Governors share your vision and aspiration for the school. They are keen for pupils'

progress to improve still further, including that of the most able pupils in writing. Governors have a wide range of skills, which they keep up to date through regular training. They use their skills to challenge and support leaders. Governors know the school well. They keep a careful check on the spending of funding for disadvantaged pupils, and for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), to ensure that it is having the impact it should. The school's improvement plan lacks some sharpness. This prevents governors from keeping a close and accurate check on leaders' progress in school improvements, such as raising outcomes in phonics.

Pupils have a very positive view of the school and enjoy their learning. This is because you have designed an exciting and engaging curriculum. Teachers plan a range of trips and experiences to bring pupils' learning to life. Pupils in Year 3 to Year 5 enjoy annual overnight camping in the school grounds, where they take part in a range of activities, including archery and climbing. Pupils enjoy the wide range of extra-curricular activities that staff provide. You plan these carefully to ensure that they meet the needs of different groups of pupils, including pupils with SEND. A typical comment from pupils was, 'There is something for everyone.' Inclusion and welcome are at the very heart of the school's kind and caring ethos. Pupils learn to respect others and value differences, including in gender and religion. Pupils value lessons about well-being and how to control their feelings. Pupils learn to value their education and are enthusiastic about achieving their attendance targets. They attend very regularly and whole-school attendance is above the national averages.

Parents and carers share pupils' extremely positive view of the school. Parents state that their children are well looked after and their various needs are met. A typical comment on Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents, praised the school's curriculum saying, 'The school offers activities that are adventurous and creative. Events around science, music, art, poetry, world heritage and other cultures encourage pupils to think independently and love education.' Parents report that their children are very happy in school and enjoy their learning.

At the previous inspection, you were asked to strengthen teaching in key stage 1. Leaders have taken decisive steps to strengthen staffing in Year 1 and Year 2, and this has had a positive impact on pupils' achievement. The key stage leader shares her expertise with staff. Teachers benefit from a range of training opportunities. Since the previous inspection, leadership and standards have improved. The proportion of pupils reaching expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics is now in line with national averages. You have taken effective steps to improve the proportion of pupils reaching greater depth in writing at key stage 1, including effective training for teachers.

The systems that leaders and staff use to check pupils' learning and measure their progress across key stages, is still being developed across the school. Some inconsistencies remain meaning that you and the governing body do not have a precise measure of pupils' achievements and their learning over time. You have identified this as an area for further development.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders place a high priority on keeping pupils safe and have made sure that safeguarding arrangements are thorough, fit for purpose and of high quality. All appropriate checks are undertaken on the suitability of staff to work with pupils. Leaders hold regular and appropriate safeguarding briefings and training for staff. As a result, staff have up-to-date knowledge of safeguarding. This keeps them alert to risks and attentive to procedures. Staff know that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. You ensure that the curriculum has opportunities for pupils to learn how to keep themselves safe in the wider community. Pupils told me that they learn about fire safety, as well as possible dangers, including peer abuse and drug abuse. The pupils with whom I spoke reported that they feel safe and secure in school. They are confident that adults will listen to any concerns that they have.

Leaders waste no time in contacting other professionals to seek support for pupils and their families when needed. You and the parent-support adviser know pupils and families very well and ensure that pupils receive the help they need to stay safe. Staff take effective action to prevent pupils from becoming missing in education, following up absences swiftly and rigorously.

Inspection findings

- The inspection focused on a number of key lines of enquiry. The first of these was to check how well children acquire early reading and writing skills in the early years. I found that in the Nursery and Reception classes, staff provide a safe, inspiring and attractive learning environment. The indoor and outdoor classrooms are a hive of activity and learning. Children play, explore and learn with great concentration and cooperation. Staff plan activities which engage children and develop their early skills, including in reading and writing. Indoor and outdoor reading areas are attractive and well resourced. In both classes, children have frequent opportunities to develop their fine motor skills through daily activities and games. During the inspection, children in the Nursery class were enjoying drawing pirate maps, showing great precision and care. Outdoors, other children were writing clues to explain where they had hidden pirate treasure. Staff plan experiences which bring children's learning to life. In the Reception class, children were planting seeds, linked to a story they had recently read. Children's workbooks show they make good progress in their early reading and writing. Standards are rising, and the proportion of children reaching a good level of development is moving closer to the national average.
- For my second key line of enquiry, I considered the effectiveness of phonics teaching. This was because the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics test fell to below the national average in 2018. I found that leaders provide training for staff in phonics. Leaders check phonics teaching very regularly to check that this training is effective. Their checks on learning show that the majority of pupils learn well. Year 6 reading ambassadors and adult volunteers support staff by listening to pupils read on a very regular basis. This means that pupils develop confidence and fluency when reading. They

use their phonics knowledge when reading unfamiliar words. Pupils routinely practise their phonics skills in their writing. I saw, though, that there are some inconsistencies to the approach to teaching phonics across different classes. In some sessions, children were not challenged to extend their learning.

- My final key line of enquiry was to check the progress pupils make in their writing in key stage 2. This was because in recent years pupils' progress has not been as strong as in mathematics and reading. I found that staff training has had a positive impact on the teaching of writing across the school. Leaders have developed staff skills through a range of training experiences. Teachers have benefited from frequent opportunities to share their ideas and watch each other teach. As a result, there is a consistent and effective approach to teaching writing. Pupils read engaging texts to develop their vocabulary and their enthusiasm to write. Leaders plan visits and experiences which widen pupils' experiences and broaden their knowledge. This has developed pupils' confidence and ambition when writing. Pupils' workbooks show that standards are rising. Pupils apply with accuracy their grammar, punctuation and spelling skills. Pupils choose interesting, varied and ambitious vocabulary to make their writing more interesting to read. They write for a range of different purposes and in different subjects. Pupils edit and improve their own and other pupils' writing. Leaders keep a careful check on learning to make sure that improvements are raising standards, including for the most able pupils.
- During the inspection, I found that behaviour is a strength of the school. Pupils are extremely polite and welcoming to visitors. Pupils move calmly around the school and show consideration for others. In classes, pupils are enthusiastic and very well behaved. Lessons are extremely purposeful, and no learning time is lost. Pupils are keen to answer questions and discuss their ideas. They listen respectfully to adults and each other. Pupils state that bullying is rare, and any incidents are dealt with quickly by adults. Pupils have a very clear understanding of the school's behaviour policy. Staff, parents and pupils agree that pupils' behaviour is a strength of the school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- staff develop a consistent approach to teaching phonics so that more pupils reach the expected standard in Year 1
- they improve the systems staff use to assess and track pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics, so that leaders and governors have a more accurate view of pupils' learning over time
- they improve the sharpness of school improvement planning to enable governors and leaders to check with greater accuracy the progress the school is making towards achieving its goals.

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

Yours sincerely

Elizabeth Stevens
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and the subject leaders for English. I also met with the early years leader. I met with the family-support adviser. I took account of 35 staff responses to Ofsted's online survey. I met with five governors, including the chair of the governing body. I met with six pupils and spoke informally with other pupils during lessons. I also considered 94 responses to Ofsted's online survey for pupils. I visited classes with you, where I observed teaching and learning and looked at pupils' work.

I spoke with parents at the start of the school day. I took account of 36 responses to Parent View, the Ofsted online questionnaire, including free-text responses. I looked at a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan. I checked the analysis of attendance. I also evaluated safeguarding procedures, including policies to keep pupils safe and on safeguarding checks. I undertook a review of the school's website.