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Mr Rob Smith
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Dear Mr Smith

Short inspection of Mossgate Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 22 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 January 2015.

This school continues to be good.

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

Since joining the school in September 2018, you have made several changes to improve many aspects of the school community. Many parents and carers appreciate the increase in communication between school and home, including through social media. Describing you as 'a breath of fresh air', parents share the opinion that you 'clearly care for every individual child and their family'. Of those who responded to Parent View – Ofsted's online questionnaire – the vast majority would recommend this school.

You and the leadership team have effectively introduced improvements in how pupils' academic progress across all subjects is assessed, recorded and closely monitored. This ensures that leaders are swift in providing bespoke support when pupils fall behind with their work. In addition, teachers and teaching assistants welcome the new marking and feedback policy. Staff told me that you have introduced better ways of working, which are more efficient but which maintain the focus on pupils' emotional, social and academic development. Staff morale is high. One parent captured the views of many others when describing staff as 'a fabulous team of dedicated, caring and talented individuals who ensure that all children are safe, happy and thriving'. This is clearly the case.

At the previous inspection in 2015, inspectors asked the leadership team – including

governors – to raise achievement in mathematics by providing more opportunities for pupils to use mathematical skills in other subjects. Since the previous inspection, a deputy headteacher who leads on mathematics has been appointed. It is clear from pupils' books that there is now a new whole-school approach to the way in which mathematics is taught. Teachers provide opportunities for real-life problem-solving, both in mathematics lessons and across the curriculum. An example of this was evident from the Year 6 Titanic project. The teacher challenged pupils to explore the costs of a residential trip to visit the Titanic museum in Belfast. Pupils used rail and ferry timetables to consider the options available. They also considered the cost of a range of accommodation and meals for the visit. This work was well differentiated for the range of abilities in the class. Teachers plan activities across year groups that bring learning to life for pupils. As a result, current pupils are making good progress with their mathematics.

Inspectors also asked that teachers check on the progress pupils are making during lessons and adapt activities so that pupils are given appropriate challenge. From our joint observations of learning during the inspection and from my scrutiny of pupils' books, it is clear to see how well teachers and teaching assistants adapt activities to ensure that pupils are motivated and stretched in their learning. Teachers and teaching assistants ask questions which make pupils think hard about their work. You and senior leaders provided evidence of how effectively subject leaders check on the quality of teaching and learning in their areas of responsibility. This ensures that the quality of teaching and learning is good over time.

Pupils make good progress during their time at Mossgate and are well prepared for the next stage in their education. The dip in the proportion of those reaching the expected standard in reading at the end of Year 6 in 2018 is not representative of current progress being made in most year groups.

Pupils are very proud of their school and take pride in their work too. They know what they need to do to improve their work and enjoy celebrating their achievements in assemblies. Pupils who spoke to me said that teachers make learning fun. The respect that pupils have for each other and the positive relationships fostered within the school contribute to the good progress that pupils make in a range of subjects. It was clear to see from the football, computer and recorder clubs that after-school activities are well attended and enjoyed by pupils.

Safeguarding is effective.

As the designated safeguarding leader – together with your deputy safeguarding leaders – you ensure that all safeguarding arrangements meet requirements. You make sure that staff fully understand their duty and follow systems and procedures for logging concerns. You ensure that all necessary checks are made on the suitability of staff to work with children. When I arrived at the start of the inspection, the effectiveness of procedures to check on those visiting the school was clear for me to see.

You make sure that the promotion of safeguarding throughout the school has a high

profile. You provide staff with regular training that is up to date so that they and members of the governing body understand the current guidance. You are prompt in making referrals to the local authority. You work well with a range of external agencies to secure expertise to support pupils' welfare, as and when necessary. You and your staff provide exceptional care and support for pupils and their families.

Inspection findings

- As part of this inspection, I focused on several agreed areas. I looked at how a culture of reading is being embedded across the school. Leaders have made reading a high priority for this academic year. There is a strong emphasis on reading for pleasure to extend reading beyond the school's structured reading scheme. For example, each class has a reading corner with a range of books suitable for the abilities of pupils. You have introduced daily reading workshops in key stage 1 and key stage 2 and this is supporting pupils in developing their inference and comprehension skills. Parents are involved – for example through information evenings – so that they know how to support their children at home. While there is evidence of family reading at home for the younger pupils, it is clear that, in key stage 2, some parents do not listen to their children reading at home often enough. This slows pupils' progress. Teachers, teaching assistants and volunteers are deployed widely to support targeted pupils with their reading. Leaders monitor the teaching closely to ensure that teachers promote reading effectively across other subjects, as well as in English lessons. You have relocated the library to a larger space and increased the range of books that pupils can borrow. However, older pupils feel that some of the books are not 'intriguing' enough and would like an even wider range of genres to choose from.
- Next, I explored how you are supporting pupils eligible for pupil premium funding. Leaders have accurately identified the barriers to learning for these pupils. Teachers clearly target pupils in their planning to ensure that they are fully included in class discussions through specific questioning. Leaders have focused most of their strategies on pastoral support – including nurture groups – in order to raise pupils' confidence and self-esteem. Parents appreciate the support provided by staff and external agencies, which parents described as 'beneficial to children's mental health'. You also fund residential trips and ensure that pupils have access to at least one after-school club. This ensures equality of opportunity. Many of the pupils eligible for pupil premium funding have additional and complex needs. Leaders and staff provide highly tailored support, and meticulously monitor its impact so that these pupils make good progress.
- I was also keen to find out how you are supporting pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). As an inclusive school, you work tirelessly to reduce any barriers to learning that pupils may have. For example, pupils have access to a range of opportunities to develop their social and emotional skills in readiness for learning. This often takes place in the nurture room, aptly named by pupils as the 'Jigsaw' room. Parents made reference to pupils' growth in confidence since they moved to this school. Your SEND coordinator is thorough in diagnosing the particular needs of pupils. She works closely with staff to reduce barriers to learning and to provide appropriate support within school or with external agencies. Pupils with SEND make good

progress from their starting points and they – and their families – have a high calibre of support. In one year group which has a high proportion of pupils with SEND and other barriers to learning, you and the governors have invested in an additional teacher to work with these pupils every morning. This is providing much-needed specialist support which is clearly developing pupils' confidence and academic achievement.

- Finally, I explored how you monitor the attendance of pupils. I was concerned about the increase in the proportion of pupils who had been persistently absent last year. You know your families very well, including the most vulnerable. You provided detailed evidence of how effectively you analyse punctuality and attendance. You have provided evidence to parents of how absences interrupt pupils' learning and have set clear expectations. Your staff's extensive work with other agencies and the local authority is of a high calibre. This has had a very positive impact on decreasing the proportion of pupils with persistent absences. However, some parents do not always help their children to attend regularly enough and this hinders pupils' progress.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the range of books available in the library and classrooms is meeting the interests of pupils
- they build on strategies to work with parents who need to develop their confidence and skills to help their children – particularly those in key stage 2 – to develop a love of reading beyond school
- you, your staff and external agencies continue to work with families whose children's progress is interrupted by too many absences.

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

Yours sincerely

Naomi Taylor
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I observed teaching and learning jointly with you. I held meetings with subject leaders, senior leaders, members of the governing body and with you as the designated safeguarding leader and one of your deputy safeguarding leaders. I spoke to a representative from the local authority. I also

spoke informally with parents at the school gates and took account of the 57 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I took account of 57 free-text responses from parents. There were no responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire so I held a meeting with staff at the end of the school day. There were no responses to Ofsted's online pupil questionnaire. I held a meeting with pupils and spoke informally with pupils during breaks and in lessons. During the inspection, I reviewed a range of school documents. These included: the school's development plans and self-evaluation documents; minutes of the governing body's meetings; safeguarding documentation; records relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance; the school website; school policies; and pupils' work and their reading logs.