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Mrs Julie Boyes  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Boyes

### **Short inspection of Dodleston CofE Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 21 May 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 provide strong, determined leadership for the school and are well supported by the senior teacher. For about three years, there was considerable turnover of staff within the school and a heavy reliance on a succession of supply teachers. You have succeeded in stabilising the staffing, in tackling weaknesses in teaching and in extending the workforce. You are now focusing appropriately on developing subject leadership and reviewing the curriculum. The work on developing the wider curriculum is bearing fruit, especially among the youngest pupils. Without any prompting, Year 1 children named the oceans of the world, explained which are the largest and the smallest, identified their position on a map and named the continents and countries lying next to them. The older pupils who met with me were very enthusiastic about the range of enrichment and sporting activities available to them.

The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral social and cultural development is strong. The pupils learn about the major world religions and have regular opportunities to take part in prayer and contemplation. They contribute to the leadership of the school through, for example, membership of the school council. They also contribute to the life of the village and local area. They develop a good understanding of life in modern Britain while, at the same time, learning about a range of cultures around the world.

The governing body has experienced a considerable turnover of membership since the last inspection. However, the situation has now been stabilised. A core group of long-standing governors has provided continuity during this time. The governors are closely involved in the work of the school and know what its strengths and areas for development are. They keep themselves well informed through regular updates from senior leaders.

The standard of behaviour in and around the school is very high. Pupils of different ages mix well with each other. This contributes to the family atmosphere which parents and carers clearly appreciate. The pupils are personable, sociable and polite. They are also very articulate and have the confidence to initiate conversations with visitors, as well as to respond to questions. They have a thirst for learning and are proud to talk about how well they are progressing. Behaviour in lessons is very good. Pupils of all ages work with a high level of concentration and interest. They work very effectively alone, in pairs and in small groups. They relate very well to their teachers and respond readily to instructions. The pupils I spoke to all said that they enjoy coming to school and are happy there.

The parents I met were very complimentary about the school. They commented on how approachable and caring staff are, on the happy atmosphere in the school and how well their children are progressing. Their comments echoed the responses to Parent View. These were overwhelmingly positive and all who completed the online questionnaire said that they would recommend the school to others.

Morale among the staff is high. All those who responded to the online questionnaire said that they enjoy working at the school and are proud to do so. They feel respected, motivated and supported. Like the parents, they think that the school is well led and managed.

At the time of the last inspection, the school was asked to: ensure that all pupils are given work that is hard enough for them; improve writing; and strengthen the role of middle leaders. You have worked successfully on these areas. However, the standard of spelling and the quality of presentation of work require further improvement.

You have introduced a system where, for each learning task, pupils are presented with varying levels of challenge from which they choose. Teachers monitor the choices so that pupils do not opt for work that is too easy. At the same time, pupils are encouraged to develop the resilience to grapple with more demanding challenges, so that they move forward in their learning. The work in books shows that this system is operating well. The pupils who met with me all said that the work they do in class is at the right level of difficulty for them.

After a drop in attainment in 2016, standards in writing have risen. Last year, the proportions of pupils reaching the expected and higher standards in the national test were above the national averages. The additional focus on writing has not detracted from other subjects because attainment in reading and mathematics was

also above average. The school's figures show that current pupils are doing at least as well as their counterparts last year. However, examination of a range of books across year groups shows that many pupils' command of spelling is insecure. The standard of handwriting is not good enough and pupils' work can often be difficult to read. Presentation is also too variable. Within the same class, presentation can range from excellent to scruffy. This variability is not confined to writing. Too often, in mathematics, the work lacks precision because pupils have not, for example, used rulers to draw diagrams.

Since the last inspection, you have reorganised responsibilities to good effect. The senior teacher now leads on developments in the curriculum, assessment, mathematics and literacy. Books are checked weekly and feedback given to individual teachers, as well as to the whole staff. The information is used to identify which pupils are falling behind with their work, so that they can receive additional help in a timely way. The impact of the additional support is carefully monitored. The results of the weekly checks are also used to identify the training needs of staff. Most recently, you have focused on developing skills in middle leadership. A member of staff is currently disseminating the results of intensive external training to the rest of her colleagues.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Parents, staff and pupils are confident that children are safe at the school. The pupils I spoke to said that they also felt safe on the way to and from school. They are taught about the potential dangers of the internet and social media and what to do if they come across any unsuitable materials. They say that bullying takes place occasionally but it is dealt with effectively. Pupils know which staff to contact if they have concerns or worries and are confident that they will receive any help they need. Through regular practices, they learn what to do and where to go in the case of a fire. All pupils learn to swim, so that they are safe near water. They learn about road safety but they are not taught how to keep themselves safe near railway lines. The school has appropriate procedures to check on the suitability of adults to work with children and all visitors are carefully vetted. The school has been meticulous in reporting any children missing from education to the local authority and in ensuring that parents who wish to educate their children at home follow the correct procedures. All staff have received the required safeguarding training. The school site is secure and access to the building and to teaching areas within the building is carefully controlled.

The school has well-organised and effective systems to support pupils with special needs and/or disabilities (SEND) or who have specific medical needs. Pupils and parents commented on how they have great confidence in the care that staff take over the welfare of individual members of the school.

### **Inspection findings**

- In addition to the improvements made since the last inspection, we discussed pupils' attendance. From 2015, attendance was below average. Last year, it

improved and was better than the national average. However, persistent absence remained high. You work hard with specific families who need additional support. As a result, your figures show that the improvements in attendance are being maintained. You and your colleagues place great emphasis on ensuring that pupils arrive at school promptly. You keep a daily record of lateness and work with any parent whose children are persistently late. On the day of the inspection, four pupils were late because of traffic problems. The previous day, no one was late. It is therefore clear that you are dealing effectively with attendance.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the quality of handwriting and presentation is of a consistently high standard across the school
- pupils spell accurately
- pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe near railway lines.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of Chester, 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

Aelwyn Pugh  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

I examined a range of documentation and discussed your self-evaluation with you and the senior teacher. I met four governors, including the chair and vice-chair of the governing body, and spoke to representatives of the local authority and the diocese. I discussed the curriculum with the senior teacher and a subject leader. I discussed safeguarding arrangements, attendance and behaviour with you and your assistant leader for those areas. You and I visited lessons to observe teaching and look at books. I met eight pupils, chosen at random from key stage 2, and spoke to staff and pupils as I walked round the school. I examined the nine responses to the staff survey and the 30 responses to Parent View. I also spoke to 17 parents and family members as they brought their children to school.