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Ms Patricia Adams
Executive Headteacher
Crab Lane Primary School
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Dear Ms Adams

Short inspection of Crab Lane Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 16 July 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 June 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Your work, and that of the associate headteacher, has ensured that pupils continue to make good progress, thrive and enjoy their education. Parents value the work of teachers. Pupils with whom I spoke, and who responded to the surveys, value the support and care they receive from the adults in the school. Teachers have high expectations of every pupil. The school's motto, 'be the best person you can be', is promoted in the everyday interactions between adults and pupils. You know and understand the barriers to pupils' learning and provide the support necessary to enable everyone to learn and achieve. The introduction of the nurture room has been a valuable addition to the school's provision for its most vulnerable pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school's high expectations of behaviour and conduct mean that pupils can learn without disruption. Pupils are polite and well-mannered.

A key strength in the school's success is the curriculum, which is interesting, relevant and engaging for pupils. You have thought carefully about pupils' needs and, as a result, you have a strong programme to develop pupils' personal and social skills. This includes the school's annual Crab Lane Festival drama production which is highly regarded by local schools. Similarly, the school contributes to the network choir performances every year. The outdoor education gives pupils the knowledge and skills to interact responsibly with their environment. In these ways you enrich and extend the experiences of many pupils. As well as pupils achieving above-average progress by the end of Year 6 in subjects such as mathematics and reading, you have made sure that pupils benefit from a broad education.

The leadership team has successfully addressed the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. You have provided more opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills. The strategy to improve pupils' range and quality of writing has proved successful, as pupils make good progress by the end of Year 6. More pupils than ever before are reaching greater depth and higher standards each year. Pupils write for different purposes in their 'project work' as well as in specific subjects such as history and religious education. You recognise that there is still more work to be done to ensure that teachers check that all pupils apply their spelling, punctuation and grammar knowledge accurately. Teachers do not consistently reinforce the school's handwriting expectations in all written work, especially in subjects other than English.

The governors are skilled and knowledgeable about education matters. They have made strong appointments to the school's leadership team. They benefit from sharing good practice with the partner school in the federation. They have a strong moral drive to ensure that disadvantaged pupils make the same progress as others. They hold leaders to account stringently while being sensitive to staff workload and well-being.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have a strong team of safeguarding leaders. This ensures that concerns are picked up quickly and actions are taken in a timely manner. All safeguarding leaders are appropriately trained, knowledgeable and experienced. Staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities well. The school's safeguarding records demonstrate that leaders monitor pupils closely and liaise effectively with a range of agencies to support pupils and their families. Leaders have a deep insight into the local context and potential risks to pupils. They ensure that personal, social and health education suitably prepares pupils for life as they grow up, including risks such as those they face when using the internet. The 'growing and changing' programme provides valuable relationship and sex education. The school supports pupils' mental health well: bullying is rare. Pupils from different backgrounds and cultures, including international new arrivals, are welcomed and feel safe. The very few racist and homophobic incidents are dealt with very seriously and effectively: repeats are rare. Parents, staff and pupils agree that Crab Lane is a safe place to learn.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection I focused on several key lines of enquiry. Firstly, I wanted to explore the effectiveness of teaching at key stage 1 because attainment has been below national averages in English and mathematics for over two years. Teaching in this key stage is good. This year's unvalidated information about pupils' attainment at the end of Year 2 indicates that there is a slight improvement compared to previous years. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils reaching expected standards is higher than for others in mathematics. Pupils' progress continues to be strong from their very low starting points on entry to the school. Nonetheless, there is room to strengthen the transition between early years and Year 1 so that more pupils adjust smoothly to the

increased demands of the key stage 1 curriculum.

- Another line of enquiry was about boys' and disadvantaged pupils' attainment and progress compared to those of girls, particularly in writing. The leadership team has set about strengthening the curriculum to increase its appeal to boys and to foster their basic skills. The work in early years to improve pupils' speech and language skills has particularly benefited boys. More boys than previously have reached a good level of development at the end of the Reception Year and they have made good progress, especially in literacy in both key stages 1 and 2.
- Across the school, you have introduced a new oracy strategy. This means that teachers encourage pupils to talk through their ideas and structure their thoughts prior to writing. A research project carried out by a middle leader has shown that this has had a particularly positive impact on boys' writing and confidence across the school. Boys are as fully engaged in writing and reading as girls in most classes. This year's unvalidated key stage 2 national test results indicate that the difference in attainment between boys and girls is diminishing.
- Leaders monitor very carefully the use of funding to support disadvantaged pupils. The strategy is detailed and evaluated rigorously. Increased levels of support on a one-to-one basis and through small-group work have made a positive difference to eligible pupils' progress and attainment. Most disadvantaged pupils in the school are boys. In some year groups disadvantaged pupils' attainment outstrips that of girls, including in English and mathematics.
- Another key line of enquiry was to explore how reading is taught in the early years and key stage 1. Leaders have ensured that there is a clear and consistent phonics (letters and the sounds they represent) scheme across both key stages. The introduction of further resources to enable pupils to visualise the blended sounds is helping pupils engage well with phonics lessons. Leaders have carefully identified individual pupils' weaknesses in their phonic skills and provided them with appropriate small-group teaching. Leaders have improved the quality of the books which pupils take home to read: these are now at the right level for their knowledge and understanding of phonics. The school has delivered workshops for parents to help them support their children to read fluently and accurately. The support for pupils who speak English as an additional language has strengthened as more international new arrivals join the school. While the proportion of pupils reaching the national standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check continues to be below the national average, it is improving year on year.
- The high rates of absence of pupils from a small number of families is an ongoing challenge. You have strengthened the team that supports pupils' attendance. The recruitment of an attendance and welfare officer and a family worker has made a positive difference to many pupils' attendance. Leaders monitor the punctuality of all pupils and regularly encourage parents to consider the impact of learning lost as a result of lateness and absences. Leaders and managers have ensured that the correct support for families is in place from the local authority. They also make sure that appropriate sanctions are imposed on families who do not ensure that their children attend school regularly. Governors keep a close eye on attendance figures. They challenge leaders robustly to find creative ways to

encourage targeted families to bring their children to school regularly and on time. While the overall attendance of pupils is improving, the rates of absence of a small number of pupils remain stubbornly high. As a result, you have rightly continued to prioritise this aspect of your work for next year.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers meticulously check pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar and consistently implement the school's handwriting policy
- transition between the early years and Year 1 is as smooth as possible so that more pupils settle quickly in key stage 1 and make rapid progress
- the attendance of the small number of pupils who are persistently absent improves securely.

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

Yours sincerely

Zarina Connolly
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection I met with you, the associate headteacher, senior leaders, the phase leaders, the special educational needs coordinator and attendance managers. I also interviewed staff responsible for maintaining the single central register, the safeguarding leaders, the leader for pupil premium funding and the local authority representative. I met with the chair of the governing body as well as two governors. With the assistant headteacher and associate headteacher, I observed learning in all classes and examined a range of pupils' workbooks. I spoke with groups of pupils from key stage 2 and key stage 1 and heard them read. I spoke with parents and carers at the school gates in the morning. There were too few responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, to be considered but I took account of six free-text responses. I took account of the 25 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and the 10 responses to the pupil survey. I looked at a range of school documents, including: information about pupils' achievement; the school's self-evaluation; the school improvement plan; information related to the monitoring of teaching; external review reports; and documents relating to safeguarding and attendance.