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Mr Andrew Proctor
Headteacher
Highfield Community Primary School
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Dear Mr Proctor

Short inspection of Highfield Community Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 14 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 the school was judged to be good in November 2014.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

You lead the school with a clear vision and purpose. Your calm and considered manner belies a steely determination to make the school as good as it can be. Since taking up your post in 2015, you, other senior leaders and the governing body have worked tirelessly to identify areas that needed improving. For example, you moved quickly to ensure that behaviour across the school was at least good and more recently to raise standards in English and mathematics. However, there is still further work to be done to make the school even better.

The school faces challenges. For example, there are a lot of pupils who start the school at different times during the year. This movement of pupils means that the organisation of the curriculum and classes must be changed each year. Despite this, new pupils settle quickly and they are well supported by staff.

You and your leadership team were rightly disappointed with results in national tests in 2018. However, you have acted swiftly to halt the decline, and work in pupils' books shows that they are beginning to make better progress than previously in reading, writing and mathematics.

Staff work hard to ensure a safe and welcoming environment for pupils. Pupils are nurtured and well cared for as they make their journey through Highfield. The

management of behaviour is excellent. There are pupils who can sometimes present with challenging behaviour. However, staff deal extremely well with these pupils and as a result, learning is not disrupted. Rewards and sanction systems are fully understood by pupils and they respond well to them. They particularly like the traffic-light system and 'golden time'. Pupils I spoke with were very keen to tell me that they thought there had been a big improvement in behaviour in recent years. Typically, pupils said that they have a love of the school.

The majority of parents and carers are happy with the education their children receive. Parents typically comment, 'there is a wonderful feeling of community at Highfield.' Relationships between staff and the wider community are strong. Parents feel that their children are well looked after and happy at school.

At the previous inspection, inspectors asked you to ensure that younger pupils used their knowledge of letters and sounds to achieve higher standards in reading. You have been successful in your approach to teaching reading in key stage 1. In 2017 and 2018, a greater proportion of pupils achieved the higher standard in reading. In addition, you were asked to ensure that the targets set for pupils were clearly understood. Most pupils are now clear about how to improve their work and what to do next. This is because teachers talk to them regularly about how to improve their work.

Governors have a wide range of skills and all are extremely committed to the school. They have a secure understanding of some of the challenges the school faces. For example, they understand that a lot of pupils move in and out of the school during the school year and that this can disrupt learning. They hold you to account and ask challenging and insightful questions to further understand the school's position, particularly in relation to standards in reading, writing and mathematics. However, they have only recently begun to look at standards in other areas of the curriculum, and as a result, they are not clear about weaknesses in subjects such as history, science and geography.

Safeguarding is effective.

Pupils say that they feel safe in school and that they are well looked after by all adults in school. Some pupils have challenges and worries in their lives and this can mean that they really value the safety that school provides for them. They know that there is always someone to talk to and share problems with. Attendance has improved in recent years because the school works hard to ensure that pupils attend regularly, despite any difficulties they may face outside school.

You ensure that all staff have appropriate and up-to-date training and as a result, staff are confident in their ability to keep pupils safe. They know what to do if they are worried about a child and what support is available for pupils in school and beyond. This ensures that keeping pupils safe is at the heart of everything you do.

Your systems for the recruitment of new staff are secure and are monitored by the governing body regularly.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection, we focused on five lines of enquiry. The first was standards in writing in key stage 1. In recent years, the standards achieved by pupils has been below the national average at the end of Year 2. In addition, results in writing were below those in reading. You and your senior leadership team identified this issue and you have acted swiftly to address this decline. Current work in pupils' books indicates that pupils in Years 1 and 2 are given many opportunities to write at length. Pupils use a range of vocabulary and punctuation to bring their writing to life. As a result of effective teaching, progress in writing is improving. However, pupils' handwriting is not as neat as it could be.
- The second focus of the inspection was the achievement of girls and disadvantaged pupils in reading in key stage 2. Results in national tests were below the national average in 2017 and although there was an improvement in 2018, results were still not as good as in writing. You have introduced a new daily reading programme. Pupils must answer a range of reading questions, including questions that develop their inference and deduction skills. For example, I observed pupils describing the meaning behind words to describe feelings. The attainment of all pupils, including girls, is rising. They have a much greater understanding of what they are reading and are reading a much wider variety of books. Teachers and teaching assistants deliver extra reading sessions for disadvantaged pupils. These interventions allow pupils to study what they are reading in depth and improve their comprehension skills. This approach is beginning to pay dividends as the gap between these pupils and other pupils nationally is diminishing.
- Next, we looked at the teaching of mathematics across the school. You and other leaders recognised that the teaching of reasoning skills was not as strong as the teaching of arithmetic. Pupils were being given many opportunities to practise arithmetic and fluency skills, but less time was given to reasoning about numbers. Since September, teachers have included more opportunities for problem solving in their lessons, and work in pupils' books shows that they are given regular challenges in mathematics. As a result of effective teaching and higher expectations, pupils are making stronger progress in mathematics.
- The fourth focus was the achievement of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). A large proportion of pupils in the school are listed on the school's special educational needs register. Most of these pupils are identified as having moderate learning difficulties and have an individual education plan. You agreed that some of these plans are not appropriate because pupils' needs could be addressed through normal classroom teaching. Sometimes, the expectations of what these pupils can achieve are not high enough.
- The final line of enquiry looked at the achievement of pupils across a range of subjects. You admit that your focus recently has been on improving achievement in English and mathematics. As a result, work in pupils' topic books, which includes history, geography and science, lacks depth. Topics are often taught rather superficially and expectations of what pupils can achieve in these subjects are not high enough. Pupils do not take pride in the way they present their work in these subjects. Teachers work hard to plan extra activities to enhance topics outside the classroom. For example, pupils visited Samlesbury Hall as part of their Tudor topic and

Manchester Science Museum as part of their science work. Pupils enjoy these trips. Themed weeks allow pupils to look at topics such as artists and periods in British history in more depth, but this sort of depth is not sustained throughout the year.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the identification of pupils with SEND is as accurate as possible and expectations of what they can achieve are high
- the presentation of pupils' work across all subjects is of a good standard
- opportunities given to pupils in science, history and geography are engaging and matched to their ability.

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

Emma Jackson
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, senior leaders and members of the governing body. I spoke to a representative from the local authority. I talked with pupils in a meeting and in classrooms. I took account of 15 responses to the online questionnaire for parents, Parent View, and eight responses to the staff survey. I visited classrooms to observe pupils' learning and looked at their work in books. I reviewed information about pupils' progress and attainment. I scrutinised the school's self-evaluation document and school improvement plan. I looked at safeguarding, including evaluating the impact of the school's procedures and policies to keep pupils safe.