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Miss S Steward
Headteacher
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Dear Miss Steward

Short inspection of Lower Kersal Community Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 6 June 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 June 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 are a motivated and determined headteacher who strives to meet the needs of all pupils in the school. Since your appointment you have wasted no time in identifying the school's strengths and areas for improvement. You have a clear vision for the school and want pupils to believe that there are no limits to their ambitions. Your evaluation of the school is reflective, evaluative and honest.

Since the last inspection, the school has faced many challenges in relation to staffing. Leaders have dealt effectively with these challenges, including a reduction in leadership capacity, ensuring that standards have remained high. For example, over the last three years, the progress that pupils make from key stage 1 to the end of key stage 2 has been in the top 7% of schools nationally.

You have recently established a strong and cohesive leadership team, which is making many further improvements. This is having a positive impact on pupils' learning and personal development. The school is harmonious and inclusive. Across the building, there are many examples of pupils' work celebrated in attractive wall displays and sculptures. The school's motto, 'a school where everyone matters', is a golden thread that permeates school life. There is a culture of high expectations and mutual respect for everyone. Pupils who I spoke with were keen to tell me that one of the best things about the school was that it is 'a diverse community that accepts everyone'.

Governors know their school and community well. They are knowledgeable and reflective. Consequently, they know the school's strengths and areas for development and use this knowledge to challenge leaders effectively.

Pupils enjoy their time at school and are proud to be part of the school community. Behaviour around the school and in lessons is good. Pupils listen well to teachers, support each other and work admirably during lessons. Parents and carers who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, were supportive of the school. They all said that they would recommend the school to others.

Following the last inspection, you were given a number of areas to improve. Most of these have been addressed. Assessment procedures are rigorous in English and mathematics. Teachers use pupil performance information to plan relevant learning activities. As a result, pupils across the school make good progress and growing proportions of pupils now reach the higher standard at the end of key stage 2, especially in reading and writing. Phonics teaching is effective and this has helped to improve pupils' spelling and the quality of their writing.

Inspectors also asked leaders to improve leadership and management by sharpening subject leaders' work. The roles of English and mathematics leaders are well embedded: they provide you with effective support in the monitoring of the quality of teaching and tracking pupils' progress. We agreed that the roles of middle leaders of the foundation subjects are not as well developed. Leaders were also asked to improve pupils' attendance. While this academic year attendance is beginning to improve, persistent absence remains high. We discussed both of these areas further during the inspection.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding throughout the school. Leaders ensure that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Records are detailed and of high quality. Staff and governors receive comprehensive training and, as a result, they know what to do if they have any concerns about pupils. Leaders work closely with external agencies to help pupils and their families.

Pupils know how to keep themselves safe in different situations, including when they are online. This is because of the regular, well-planned opportunities for learning across the curriculum. Pupils I spoke to said that they feel safe and told me that they can share any concerns about school or home life with staff. All of the parents and carers who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, said that their children are safe and happy.

Inspection findings

- This inspection focused on a number of lines of enquiry. The first of these considered the attendance of pupils. This was because, over the last three years, attendance has been low and persistent absence high. You have identified this as an area for improvement and are taking action to ensure that attendance

increases rapidly. You and your attendance lead monitor the attendance of all pupils closely. You know your families well and work effectively with external agencies to offer support where needed. Pupils enjoy the different ways in which leaders celebrate good attendance. Individual case studies show that, as a result of your actions, the attendance of pupils has improved and persistent absence is declining. However, despite your actions, persistent absenteeism remains high. We agreed that this needs to continue as an area for improvement.

- The second line of enquiry we looked at was the progress pupils are making in their phonic skills in Year 1. Effective steps have been taken, since the last inspection, to strengthen phonics provision. There is a consistent approach to the teaching of phonics across the early years and key stage 1. The phonics leader is knowledgeable and supports staff admirably. As a result, they have the necessary skills, knowledge and understanding. Teachers therefore use a variety of approaches that encourage pupils to read letters and write sounds, which makes learning enjoyable. The phonics leader systematically tracks pupils' progress in phonics and ensures that targeted support is quickly put into place for any pupils who begin to fall behind. As a result of these changes, achievement in phonics is continuing to rise for all pupils.
- Another area that we considered was the most-able pupils' progress in mathematics in key stage 2. This was because published data from national assessments in 2017 showed that achievement at the higher standard was below the national average. You acted quickly and targeted this as an immediate area for improvement. Your newly appointed leader for mathematics is knowledgeable and determined that all pupils should have access to high-quality mathematics teaching. He attends relevant training and works alongside staff, improving teaching across the school. Bespoke training is implemented to deepen teachers' knowledge and skills. The school's current assessment information and the work in pupils' books confirm that pupils across the school are making rapid progress and greater proportions of pupils are now attaining at the higher standard.
- The last line of enquiry that we considered was the progress that pupils are making in subjects other than English and mathematics. We discussed the school's curriculum and you were able to explain the clear rationale behind its design. The curriculum is not only broad and balanced but provides real-life learning experiences for pupils. Pupils who I spoke with were keen to tell me that they value and enjoy the wide range of topics, trips and activities provided for them. However, recent changes that you have implemented to improve achievement in the foundation subjects are still in the early stages of development. Current school assessment information identified that achievement is lower in the foundation subjects than it is in mathematics and English. We agreed that more time is needed to improve and refine the way that middle leaders track and assess pupils' learning.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- improve and refine the way that middle leaders track and assess pupils' learning in subjects other than English and mathematics so that achievement rises to reflect the high standards in English and mathematics
- continue to reduce the rate of persistent absenteeism.

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

Yours sincerely

Julie Barlow
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I observed teaching and learning and scrutinised examples of pupils' work. I met with you and with senior and middle leaders. I also met with the designated pupil and family liaison officer and the school secretary. I met with three governors, including the vice-chair of the governing body, and spoke with a representative of the local authority. I spoke with a group of seven pupils in key stage 2 and with other pupils informally in lessons and around the school.

I evaluated the 18 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and took account of the 19 free-text responses from parents. I also took account of 23 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and 59 responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire. I reviewed a range of school documents, including the school's self-evaluation, development plans and assessment records, minutes of the governing body meetings, safeguarding documentation and records relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance. I also considered information posted on the school's website.