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Mr Steve Marsland
Headteacher
Russell Scott Primary School
Clare Street
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Dear Mr Marsland

Short inspection of Russell Scott Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 24 May 2017, 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 April 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Your strong leadership has established a culture of high expectations where everyone is valued and respected. The school's motto, 'reach high, go far', underpins all that the school does. You have developed a strong team spirit across the staff. The very large majority of staff who responded to the online survey are proud to work in the school. They think that the school is well led and managed.

You have your finger on the pulse of the school. Your self-evaluation is accurate and secures continual improvement. You and other leaders carefully track the progress that pupils make and put interventions into place for those pupils who are not making the progress that they should.

Since the previous inspection, you have overseen considerable building work, which has created a bright and spacious learning environment. Despite ongoing refurbishment works, you and your governors have ensured that all pupils continue to get a good start to their education. Plans are under way to improve the limited outdoor play area for pupils in key stages 1 and 2.

You have established the school as a strategic partner with a local outstanding school and as a regional training centre for technology. These partnerships provide staff with access to a variety of training opportunities and the opportunity to share good practice with colleagues from other schools.

You are relentless in your focus on raising pupils' aspirations. For example, you organise careers fairs to enable pupils to learn about different jobs and the skills that they need for their chosen careers. Pupils say that they feel safe and enjoy school. One pupil commented that: 'Teachers are caring and we learn lots.' Pupils are friendly and polite. They behave well around the school and in lessons. Pupils wear their uniform well, showing pride in their school. They enjoy the wide range of extra-curricular clubs on offer. Visits to a local supermarket promote their understanding of ethical topics such as 'fair trade'. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about the programme, which supports them to become more confident and resilient in their learning.

Parents are very positive about the school. As one parent commented: 'Teachers are amazing. The headteacher and all his staff do everything they possibly can for their school.' The overwhelming majority of parents who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, would recommend the school to others.

You have responded well to the areas for improvement identified in the last inspection. You have continued to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Teachers are provided with opportunities to learn from each other as well as from colleagues in local schools. Teachers have high expectations and use their good subject knowledge to plan interesting lessons. Leaders have provided training to improve teachers' questioning skills so that they are better equipped to explore pupils' understanding and deepen their learning.

My review of your data and scrutiny of pupils' work indicate that pupils are making good progress in writing. Teachers encourage pupils to write at length and develop subject-specific vocabulary. There is a strong focus from teachers on ensuring that pupils are accurate in their spelling and punctuation. The work in pupils' books is neat and well presented. Teachers are making effective use of the 'chilli challenge', approach with different levels of challenge in each activity. This has supported all pupils, especially the most able, in setting their own goals. Teachers provide more opportunities for pupils to improve their speaking skills. For example, pupils are encouraged to listen to each other and discuss their ideas with their 'talk partners' and then with the class.

You have rightly focused on improving the standards that pupils achieve in reading. Your team's work has already led to some success. You acknowledge that there is more work to be done to ensure that the progress pupils make in reading continues to improve. You have taken steps to improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. However, you are well aware that these groups do not attend school regularly enough.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Records are detailed and of high quality. There is a strong culture of keeping pupils safe in school. All staff take their roles and responsibilities seriously. Leaders make checks

on staff when they are recruited to the school to ensure that they are suitable to work with children. Staff receive regular training updates and know how to alert leaders to any concerns that they may have. You and your governors have acted with the necessary urgency to ensure that the school buildings are safe. Leaders work effectively with external agencies to ensure that pupils are kept safe and their families are well supported. There are appropriate filters in place to ensure pupils' safety when using the internet. Parents I spoke with, including those who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, felt that their children are safe and well cared for.

Inspection findings

- Governors are ambitious for the school and the local community. They are aware of the school's strengths and also of which areas could be improved. Governors regularly check that the school's safeguarding procedures are up to date and know how to deal with safeguarding issues should they arise. They monitor and challenge leaders on how the pupil premium funding is spent and the impact this has on outcomes for those pupils who are eligible. Governors maintain good lines of communication with staff and parents through regular visits. They have invested heavily in technology, recognising the opportunities to enhance pupils' learning.
- You recognised that pupils' progress in reading at the end of key stage 2 was below the national average over the past few years. You have raised the profile of reading and introduced a range of effective strategies to improve pupils' progress. For example, you have invested in 'boy-friendly' texts to engage boys in their learning. Pupils who have difficulty in reading are supported by an intensive reading programme. Records show that pupils read regularly, including at home. Pupils talked enthusiastically about books and said that they have access to a range of books in the library to capture their interest. Leaders have provided training so that teachers now spend more time developing pupils' comprehension of what they are reading. You hold workshops to encourage more parents to engage with reading. You celebrate reading by holding a book week and giving out awards for reading. Current assessment information shows that progress in reading is improving. However, you recognise that reading remains an area for further development.
- In 2016, low-ability disadvantaged pupils did not make enough progress in reading and mathematics. You have a detailed understanding of the barriers to learning for these pupils. The pupil premium funding is used effectively to provide extra teaching sessions to help these pupils catch up. For example, specialist speech and language support helps those pupils with specific learning difficulties. Pupils who read to me were able to use their phonic skills well to read fluently. They could work out unfamiliar words by blending sounds of letters. Scrutiny of pupils' books shows that opportunities are given to pupils to regularly extend their mathematical thinking and understanding.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school and this is shown by their above-average attendance. However, absence and persistent absence for disadvantaged pupils and those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities have

been higher than those of other pupils in the past. Leaders know individual pupils and families well and work closely with them, engaging the support of the education welfare officer. The pupil premium funding supports eligible pupils to attend breakfast club and after-school clubs. The impact of these initiatives is that the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has increased alongside a reduction in their persistent absenteeism. However, you recognise that the attendance of some of these pupils is not as good as it should be.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- there is a continued focus on improving pupils' standards in reading
- the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities improves further.

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

Yours sincerely

Ahmed Marikar
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this short inspection I met with you, other school leaders and a group of teachers. I met with three members of the governing body, including the chair of the governing body. I also held telephone conversations with two representatives from the local authority. I met with eight pupils from key stage 2 and spoke to others during breaktimes. I visited a number of classes with you and the leader of the early years, where I observed teaching and learning, looked at pupils' work and spoke to pupils. I also heard pupils from Year 2 and Year 6 read. We carried out a detailed work scrutiny of pupils' work across the school. I spoke with parents as they dropped their children off at school. I took account of 45 responses to Parent View, the Ofsted online questionnaire, including 44 free-text responses. I also considered the views of 27 staff and 87 pupils through Ofsted's online questionnaires. I looked at a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and information about pupils' attainment and progress. I also evaluated safeguarding procedures, including policies to keep children safe; records of training; safeguarding checks; and attendance information. I also undertook a review of the school's website.