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Mr David Potter
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Dear Mr Potter

Short inspection of Middlefield Community Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 22 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 March 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Your calm and measured leadership places the needs of pupils at the centre of all your decisions. Consequently, the school has flourished since the last inspection. Pupils are happy and safe. They fully engage in their learning and are well-prepared for the next stage of their education. Together with your leadership team, you know your school well. You understand where the school needs to develop and take well-considered actions to bring about improvement.

At the time of the last inspection, middle leaders' leadership skills were not fully developed. You have provided high-quality training and support so that all middle leaders are able to manage their areas of responsibility effectively. The improved leadership in subject areas has led to the development of a creative and exciting curriculum. Pupils are inspired and keen to learn and as a result are making improved progress across the curriculum.

Since the last inspection, you have ensured that staff meetings contain frequent opportunities for staff to share good practice. Teachers also engage in observing experienced practitioners teaching in their own classrooms so that outstanding practice can be shared across the school. As a result of the improved opportunities for improving practice, teachers are able to facilitate high-quality learning for pupils across the curriculum. For example, pupils are making stronger progress in

mathematics because of teachers' improved confidence in providing activities that allow pupils to explore mathematical concepts.

During the last inspection, teachers did not consistently challenge most-able pupils in key stage 1. The introduction of the new curriculum for English ensures that opportunities for stretch and challenge are incorporated into every lesson. This has had a positive impact and the proportion of pupils that reach the higher standard is increasing steadily each year. However, although the proportion of pupils reaching the higher standard is improving it remains below the national average and leaders are aware that there is still more to do.

Pupils' progress in mathematics is not as strong as for reading and writing, including for the most able. Progress for mathematics dipped in the 2017 published data. In 2018, pupils' progress increased but remained below that in reading and writing. Leaders have changed the curriculum for mathematics considerably and current pupils are showing much stronger progress.

You have worked hard to improve pupils' attendance and there has been steady improvement over the last three years. The many interventions that you have put in place are having a positive impact and current pupils' attendance continues to improve. Overall attendance is now broadly in line with national averages. However, the proportion of pupils that are frequently absent from school is not falling quickly enough and is still well above the national average.

The vast majority of pupils want to come to school. They enjoy their learning and like helping others to learn. They are fully engaged during learning and are eager to answer questions and give their opinion. They listen to each other's ideas and work cooperatively. Pupils' personal development is strong. Social, moral, spiritual and cultural education is well developed across the curriculum, particularly through the new philosophy curriculum that you have recently introduced. Pupils are well-prepared for life in modern Britain.

Governance is strong. Governors know the strengths of the school and where it needs to improve. They understand the strategic nature of their role and have the skills necessary to hold you to account. They are very supportive of the improvements that you want to make.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Staff receive safeguarding training frequently and know how to identify pupils that need help. Staff show a clear understanding of the school's safeguarding policies and follow the appropriate steps to ensure pupils' safety.

You and your leaders know your pupils and their families well. This allows you to respond promptly to support your vulnerable pupils. You have developed strong relationships with external agencies to ensure that you can help parents to access the most appropriate support for their children.

Pupils know how to keep themselves safe. They talk confidently about the dangers that they can face online, particularly when using social media.

Inspection findings

- I was interested to find out how you had responded to the dip in pupils' progress in mathematics in the 2017 published data. You explained that your new mathematics lead has introduced a mathematics curriculum that is based around mathematics mastery. Pupils now regularly apply their learning to new situations and are asked to explain their answers. This increased challenge, together with the training that you have put in place for teachers and teaching assistants, has led to the improvement in the 2018 published data and the improved progress in mathematics for current pupils.
- Problem-solving and reasoning are at the heart of the new mathematics curriculum. Teachers have received training that has improved their skills. However, these skills are still embedding. As a result, teaching does not consistently stretch the most able pupils and help them to move on in learning. You are aware of this and have kept the improvement of mathematics as a focus for the next year.
- We also discussed pupils' progress in reading. This has been particularly strong in recent years and I was interested to find out how you had managed to maintain such a high standard. You explained that consistent approaches to learning across year groups allowed pupils to transfer their skills from year to year and so maintain their progress without any slippage due to transition. Reading is the key driver for the English curriculum and so pupils read a wide range of challenging books during their learning. Consequently, pupils' reading skills remain at a high standard.
- We looked at current attendance and you explained the many strategies that you have put in place to try and help pupils attend school regularly. These strategies are bringing about improvement, but it is not quick enough. In particular, the proportion of pupils that are frequently absent from school remains stubbornly high.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils' progress in mathematics improves further by embedding problem-solving and reasoning, especially for the most able
- pupils' attendance improves further, especially for those pupils who are frequently absent from school.

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

Yours sincerely

Erica Sharman
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I examined a range of documents, including: safeguarding records and policies; information on pupils' performance and attendance; and the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan.

I met with you and other members of your leadership team. I met with a representative of the local authority and I met with the chair of the governing body.

I observed lessons with school leaders in several subject areas and looked at work in the pupils' books. I spoke informally to pupils around the school at breaktime and at lunchtime. I observed pupils' behaviour both in and out of lessons.

There were no responses to the pupils' survey. I took into account the one response to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I also considered the 64 responses to the school's own questionnaire as well as the views of 13 parents that I met in the school playground. I considered the 17 responses to the staff questionnaire.