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Mrs J Callaghan
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Callaghan

Short inspection of Wild Bank Community School

Following my visit to the school on 18 December 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 October 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.**

Since taking on the role of headteacher in 2017, you have worked well with other leaders to address issues caused by historic instability in staffing. You have appointed key members of staff, including a new deputy headteacher, and your strong leadership team is bringing about school improvement. As a result, you have a broad and balanced curriculum where pupils enjoy a wide range of enrichment opportunities. You have recently received awards in areas such as science and physical education, which commend leaders' work in these areas.

You receive the support of a dedicated and effective board of governors whose members share a broad range of skills. Governors are frequent visitors to school, where they gather information about pupils' learning. As a result, they provide effective challenge to leaders because they know the school well.

The vast majority of parents and carers speak positively about Wild Bank Community School and are very grateful for the way in which staff nurture and care for their children. All those who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and those spoken to during the inspection, said that the school is well led and managed and that their children are happy at school.

At the last inspection, the inspector asked senior leaders to ensure that staff have

the necessary skills to manage the infrequent incidents of poor behaviour successfully, and that they record incidents in an even more efficient manner. A larger than typical proportion of pupils join or leave the school each year. You work effectively to manage the effects of this by ensuring that there is consistency in expectations relating to pupils' behaviour. All members of staff follow the school's behaviour procedures. The school's system for logging incidents of poor behaviour is effective and enables leaders to check that behaviour is improving. As a result, pupils behave very well in school. This is most evident in classrooms where positive attitudes greatly support pupils' learning and their relationships with each other.

The previous inspector also asked leaders to ensure that when pupils are working on their own without adult support, they have clearly focused tasks, especially during reading sessions. Inspection evidence showed that pupils can work independently and effectively in groups. We agreed to look at developments in the teaching of reading as part of the inspection. Finally, the previous inspector asked leaders to ensure that pupils had greater opportunities to write at length, to raise their achievement in writing. Once again, we agreed to look at this as part of the inspection.

During the inspection, we discussed the areas of the school's work that require further development. Firstly, there are still too many of the most able pupils who do not reach the higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics during their time in key stage 2. Furthermore, the progress that pupils make in writing is inconsistent over time in key stage 2. Additionally, leaders and teachers are not currently providing pupils with regular access to fiction and non-fiction books at a high enough level to challenge their thinking and develop further their vocabulary. Finally, aspects of your school's development planning and English subject planning lack the refinement necessary to ensure that leaders, including governors, can plan for, and check on, the impact of actions taken to develop pupils' outcomes.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team ensures that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You work effectively with parents and carers and with external agencies to ensure that the most vulnerable pupils in your school receive the correct levels of support.

Pupils behave well in class and around school. All parents who responded to Ofsted's questionnaire said that their children felt safe in school and that leaders ensure that pupils are well behaved. One parent, reflecting the views of others, noted, 'The school is amazing. The staff go above and beyond to help the pupils and their parents and carers.'

Pupils feel safe in school and have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe. This is because school leaders provide them with opportunities to learn about personal safety both in the real world and online. For example, members of the police service visit the pupils to talk to them about 'stranger danger'. This has helped the pupils to understand how to keep themselves safe. Your strong focus on the pastoral care of pupils is evident in the way in which

adults cultivate pupils' mental health. Your school nurture area, 'The Sunshine Room', provides pupils with well-crafted opportunities to develop their personal, social and emotional well-being. As a result of your work in this area, the school recently received an award for its substantial efforts in supporting the mental health of pupils.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection, we explored several lines of enquiry. The first considered the performance of pupils in writing. Since your appointment, you have worked effectively with leaders to bring about improvement in this area. You ensure that subject leaders and teachers share pieces of pupils' writing with leaders and teachers from other schools. This has enabled them to make accurate assessments of pupils' progress. Additionally, in key stage 1, parents attend workshops which help them to support their children in areas such as phonics and handwriting.
- Improvements in pupils' writing have been most notable in early years and key stage 1, where pupils are making good progress. During the inspection, for example, children in the Nursery class were working in an effective manner with teachers and teaching assistants to produce early writing about the nativity. However, the progress of pupils in writing throughout key stage 2 is inconsistent over time and the school's most recent published performance information in 2018 shows that the progress of pupils by the end of Year 6 is well below that seen nationally. This is because work, on occasions, lacks the planning and careful sequencing needed to ensure rapid progress over time.
- A second line of enquiry considered how effective leaders' efforts have been to improve pupils' outcomes in reading in key stage 2. Leaders are working hard to develop pupils' understanding in this area. Teachers and teaching assistants have received effective training. They now teach pupils the broad range of skills necessary to develop their reading comprehension skills. Teaching assistants provide effective support to pupils who need additional help with reading skills. A new system to promote vocabulary development in Year 6 is showing promising results and leaders plan to extend the system throughout key stage 2. As a result of leaders' focus in this area, the progress of pupils by the end of key stage 2 is broadly average in comparison with that seen nationally.
- Your school library is currently under development and you are ensuring that it contains a broad range of good-quality fiction books. Reading corners in classrooms promote a love of reading. However, pupils do not currently have regular access to a broad enough range of fiction and non-fiction books that are consistently set at the right level. This limits pupils' ability to broaden their vocabulary and use the written word as support in developing the sophistication of their own writing.
- My final line of enquiry looked at how leaders ensure that the most able pupils in key stage 2 receive appropriate levels of challenge in lessons to ensure that they reach the higher levels, most notably in English and mathematics. Inspection evidence, including work in pupils' books, shows that teachers are providing some challenges for pupils. However, this is not consistent over time and on

some occasions, the most able pupils are set the same work as others with no additional challenge until the end of the task. As a result, these pupils do not make the progress they should in areas such as mathematics, writing and reading.

- During the inspection, leaders shared with me their subject action plans for English and for whole-school development. These plans are effective in developing aspects of school improvement. However, in places, development planning is unnecessarily complicated. As a result, there is not always a clear and coherent focus on the main areas that need developing further. This means that leaders cannot easily check on the school's progress towards improvement.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the most able pupils in key stage 2 receive additional challenge to ensure that a greater proportion achieve the higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics
- a wider range of fiction and non-fiction books is regularly available to all pupils to enhance their love of reading and develop further their reading comprehension skills and the sophistication of their writing.
- they sharpen whole-school and subject development planning to ensure that there is a clear emphasis on the areas where leaders need to focus their attention
- pupils' progress in writing is developed through carefully sequenced and well-planned work in key stage 2.

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

Gill Pritchard
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with pupils to gain their views of school life and their understanding of safety. I held meetings with you to discuss your school's evaluation of performance and safeguarding procedures. I met with the chair of your governing body and six other governors to consider aspects of school leadership and safeguarding. I also met subject leaders to discuss my key lines of enquiry linked to reading and writing.

I looked at pupils' progress in books and reviewed documentation, which included your evaluation of the school's strengths and areas for improvement, the school development plan and action plan for English. I considered 20 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, 17 responses from Ofsted's parent free-text survey, one response from the staff survey and 40 responses from the pupil survey.

I visited the Nursery and Reception classes and all classes in key stages 1 and 2, together with you, to observe pupils' learning. I reviewed a range of safeguarding documentation, including a safeguarding audit and the school's record of checks undertaken on newly appointed staff.