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Mr Andrew Ross
Principal
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Dear Mr Ross

Short inspection of Rudheath Primary Academy

Following my visit to the school on 6 March 2019, 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 February 2015.

This school continues to be good.

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

You and your staff continue to provide an inclusive learning community where pupils and their families feel highly valued. Everyone shows a dedication to your vision of 'inspiring the minds and building the futures' of your pupils. Leaders and teachers have high expectations of pupils' academic achievement alongside their personal development.

Parental views are summed up in their comments acknowledging how you and your team 'have not just turned the school around but made it a respected school in the community' which was clear for me to see. Of those who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, the vast majority would recommend this school.

You, your senior leaders, governors and the trust have an accurate and reflective view of the school's strengths and priorities. Together, and with the support of the trust, you are determined to improve the school further. You have high expectations of what you can achieve while being mindful of and realistic about staff workloads. Staff are very appreciative of the training and support networks that the trust provides. As a result, staff morale is high.

At the previous inspection in 2015, inspectors asked the leadership team, including

governors, to raise achievement in English by making it clear how pupils can improve their writing. Leaders have provided training for staff in a whole-school approach to teaching writing. Teachers and teaching assistants use the phonics sessions well to develop pupils' initial writing skills. As they move through key stage 1 and key stage 2, teachers help pupils to structure and plan their writing for a range of audiences. Teachers arrange trips and visits beyond school and this inspires pupils to write. Pupils learn to develop their skills in editing and improving their own work. As a result, the progress and standards reached in writing are continuing to improve as pupils move through the school.

You were also asked to raise achievement in mathematics. From talking to the leader of mathematics and scrutinising pupils' books, it is clear that a whole-school approach to mathematics has been adopted. From our joint observations of teaching and learning, it was evident that teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Teachers plan activities so that groups and individuals are appropriately challenged and no time is wasted. Teachers provide ample opportunities for real-life problem-solving which brings learning to life for pupils.

Pupils are very proud of their school and they take pride in their work, too. They know what they need to do to improve their work and are keen to do well. The respect that pupils have for each other, and the positive relationships fostered within the school, contribute to the good progress that pupils make in a range of subjects. Your work on raising pupils' awareness of the nine protected characteristics is of a high calibre. Parents told me how much they appreciate the sensitive ways in which pupils of all ages learn about personal choices that people make in society. As a result, pupils are well prepared for the diverse communities in which they live. They are well prepared for the next stage in their education, both academically and in their personal development and resilience.

Safeguarding is effective.

The designated safeguarding leader, together with you and the other deputy safeguarding leaders, ensure that all safeguarding arrangements meet requirements. You make sure that staff fully understand their duty and follow systems and procedures for logging concerns. You ensure that all necessary checks are made on the suitability of staff to work with children. When I arrived at the start of the inspection the effectiveness of procedures to check on those visiting school was evident.

You make sure that the promotion of safeguarding throughout the school has a high profile. This was evident from talking to lunchtime supervisors, kitchen staff and the premises manager. You provide staff with regular training that is up to date, so that they, and members of the governing body, understand the current guidance. You are prompt in making referrals to the local authority. You work well with a range of external agencies to secure expertise to support pupils' welfare, as and when necessary. You and your staff provide exceptional care and support for pupils and their families.

Inspection findings

- As part of this inspection, I looked at how effectively you and your staff are taking action to improve outcomes in the phonics screening check in Year 1. You have a consistent approach to the teaching of phonics in Reception, key stage 1 and, when necessary, for older pupils. In early years, girls and boys alike were very excited to learn the 'ee' sound, repeating sentences after the teacher and then writing words on whiteboards. The leader who has responsibility for reading throughout the school ensures that staff have the knowledge, skills and resources they need to teach phonics and reading effectively. Leaders regularly analyse information to identify any pupils who are struggling. They act swiftly to ensure that pupils receive help to catch up quickly, particularly pupils who speak English as an additional language. As a result, pupils' outcomes in phonics are now stronger, including for boys, than previously and close to the national average for those reaching the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check. However, teachers and teaching assistants who are relatively new to teaching phonics, have not had recent updates on best practice.
- I explored how you have improved the way that reading is taught across the school. From a young age, children develop a love of books and stories through captivating storytelling in early years. You have ensured that teachers have the correct skills and knowledge to use assessment information accurately to build effectively on what pupils already know. As a result, learning activities now closely match the needs and interests of the pupils. Pupils have opportunities to extend their vocabulary through well-crafted challenges. Staff skilfully use questions that develop pupils' ideas and refine their skills. Leaders ensure that parents are given opportunities to develop their own skills so that they can encourage their children's reading. There are also video clips on the school website to support parents. It is apparent, however, that some pupils do not read regularly beyond school and this hinders their progress. There are also inconsistencies in how effectively teachers are checking and using pupils' reading records.
- I explored how class books are developing pupils' knowledge and skills across a range of subjects. Teachers choose high-quality texts for each class to read and these are the platform on which the broad, balanced and inspiring curriculum is built. Using these books, teachers ignite the imaginations of pupils. Through the class book, pupils are able to develop their interests in subjects such as science, geography, history and the arts. This was evident from the work around 'The Tale of Peter Rabbit' that Year 2 pupils read last term. The teachers skilfully used this book to explore the Victorian period in which the author, Beatrix Potter, lived. Pupils were able to compare Victorian schools to current day and a visit to Tatton Park brought learning to life for pupils. Staff promote reading for pleasure among pupils well and this develops their interests in a wide range of subjects.
- Finally, I investigated pupils' attendance. You ensure that staff promptly follow up on any absences. You know your families extremely well and staff work to build trust and positive relationships. You work closely with other professionals, outside agencies and charities to ensure that families receive the guidance and support that they need. Pupils understand the importance of attending school

every day. As a result, attendance continues to improve and is broadly in line with national figures and the number of pupils who are persistently absent is reducing. However, the persistent absence of a small proportion of pupils, due to unauthorised holidays in term time, has a negative impact on overall attendance and hinders the progress that these pupils make.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers and teaching assistants have regular updates on best practice in teaching phonics
- they review how teachers and teaching assistants are using pupils' reading records to improve pupils' fluency with reading
- they build on strategies to work with parents who need to develop their confidence and skills to help their children to develop a love of reading beyond school
- you, your staff and external agencies work with families whose children's progress is interrupted by too many absences to improve attendance.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Cheshire West and Chester. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Naomi Taylor
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I jointly observed teaching and learning with you and also with your deputy headteacher. I held meetings with subject leaders, senior leaders, members of the governing body and with the designated safeguarding leader and you in your capacity as one of the deputy safeguarding leaders. I also held a meeting with the chief executive officer and two improvement partners of the multi-academy trust. I analysed the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and I spoke informally with parents at the school gates to seek their views. I also took account of free-text responses from parents. I analysed the staff responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire and I spoke to several staff informally during the day. I held a meeting with pupils and spoke informally with pupils during breaks and in lessons. There were no responses to Ofsted's online pupil questionnaire. During the inspection, I reviewed a range of school documents. These included: the school's development plans and self-evaluation documents; minutes of the governing body meetings; safeguarding documentation; records

relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance; an education, health and care plan; the school website; school policies and pupils' work. I listened to pupils reading and analysed their reading logs.