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Mrs Julia Sandiford-Mitchell
Headteacher
Shawclough Community Primary School
Thrum Hall Lane
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Dear Mrs Sandiford-Mitchell

Short inspection of Shawclough Community Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 6 December 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 May 2013.

This school continues to be good.

You and the leadership team have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have established a culture across the school which promotes pupils' academic aspirations alongside their physical and emotional well-being. The vast majority of parents are very satisfied with all aspects of school life and described the 'friendly and nurturing staff and environment' and several referred to the school as 'my Shawclough family'.

You, the senior leadership team and governors are reflective and have an accurate view of the school's strengths and priorities. Together, you use a range of information to produce school improvement plans that continue to help to move the school forward. Governors bring a wide range of skills which allow them to support the school and challenge your decisions. You are determined to continually improve all aspects of school life and have high expectations of what you and your staff can achieve.

At the previous inspection in 2013, inspectors asked you to increase the proportion of teaching that is outstanding and raise achievement further. Now, the quality of teaching is never less than good and is often better. This is because you ensure that there are many opportunities to share best practice both across and beyond the school. You and several leaders have considerable expertise and work with teachers in other schools to improve their practice.

You have embedded transparent systems and procedures for checking the quality

of teaching and learning. You hold staff to account, using precise targets that are linked to accelerating pupils' progress. As a result, pupils' outcomes continue to improve.

Teachers plan activities to meet the range of abilities of pupils and adapt work in lessons as needed. The senior leadership team and subject leaders closely monitor the progress of individual pupils and groups of pupils. As a result, teachers are able to plan bespoke support for individuals and groups of pupils who occasionally fall behind with their work.

Inspectors also asked you to link targets for staff with prioritising quicker progress for pupils. You ensure that all staff have challenging targets and this has resulted in improvements in pupils' progress as they move through the school. As an inclusive school, you work tirelessly to reduce any barriers to learning that pupils may have. For example, the 'Woodland Room' is a resource where pupils have access to a range of therapies and develop their social and emotional skills in readiness for learning.

Following a dip in results in 2016, the results of 2017 show that the proportion of pupils reaching expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2 was higher than the national average. Pupils reaching the expected standard in English and mathematics at the end of key stage 1 in 2017 was close to the national average, showing an improving picture. The percentage of children reaching a good level of development in the early years was lower than the national average but given that the proportion who speak English as an additional language is double the national average, this represents good progress from individual starting points. Leaders have implemented effective strategies to increase the proportion of pupils who reach the higher standards in reading and writing by the time they leave school.

Parents told me how well their children have settled into Nursery and Reception. Leaders ensure that the provision both in classrooms and outdoors develops children's love of learning from an early age. This continues as pupils move through each key stage. You and your staff ensure that pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their education by the time they leave Year 6.

Safeguarding is effective.

In your role as the designated safeguarding leader, together with your deputy designated safeguarding leader, you work relentlessly to ensure that all safeguarding arrangements meet requirements. You make sure that staff fully understand their duty and follow systems and procedures for raising concerns. You and your business manager ensure that all necessary checks on the suitability of staff to work with children are in place.

You make sure that the promotion of safeguarding throughout the school has a high profile. You provide staff with training that is up to date so that they and members of the governing body understand the current guidance. You and the

deputy designated safeguarding leader are prompt in making referrals to the local authority. Together, you rigorously follow up all concerns and make sure that pupils are kept safe. 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. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality.

Inspection findings

- As part of this inspection I looked at how reading is taught across the school. The reason for this is that the progress made across key stage 2 in 2017 was average and for the last two years the progress made by the higher-ability pupils in reading was in the bottom 20% of schools. You and your leadership team have put a number of strategies in place to address this. For example, you have introduced more opportunities for the development of comprehension and inference skills so that more pupils reach the higher standards by the time they leave school. Teachers and teaching assistants throughout early years and key stage 1 ensure that there is a systematic approach to the teaching of phonics. This is having a positive impact on current pupils' performance. From as early as Nursery class, pupils were seen learning the 's' sound. Repeating the sound when they were shown the drawing of a snake and using their fingers to draw the shape of the 's' excited the children and provided a fun introduction to phonics. Year 2 pupils who read to me used their understanding of letters and their sounds well to work out unfamiliar words. Leaders have improved the quantity and quality of books available in the library, classrooms and for reading at home. Your staff work with parents whose English language is weak and this increases opportunities for family learning beyond school.
- Second, I looked at how the pupil premium funding is used to support disadvantaged pupils, particularly those of higher ability. In 2017, the proportion reaching higher standards was lower than for other pupils. You use this fund to employ a teaching assistant to deliver extra sessions before school and as a result all disadvantaged pupils met the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics in 2017. You and governors ensure that funding is well used for both academic support and support for the social and emotional well-being of disadvantaged pupils. As a result, disadvantaged pupils' progress, including those of higher ability, is now much closer to that of other pupils nationally. Examples of pupil premium spending include subsidising the costs of school trips and curriculum enhancements. These experiences broaden pupils' horizons, take them beyond their local community and bring learning to life. For example, teachers use outdoor pursuits to build pupils' resilience and draw upon these experiences when back in the classroom.
- Third, I investigated the opportunities for writing across the curriculum. In 2017, the proportion of pupils reaching greater depth in understanding how to write well, by the end of key stage 2, was not as strong as seen nationally and no pupils reached greater depth in writing in key stage 1. Leaders are now targeting more pupils to reach greater depth in their writing. We observed how effectively teachers plan the use of role play as a tool to motivate pupils to talk extensively

and build vocabulary before they embark on writing at length. Progress in pupils' books shows that opportunities for writing in topic work are motivating girls and boys alike and quickening the progress of middle- and higher-ability pupils. During my meeting with pupils, they told me how much they enjoyed researching aspects of the Second World War and the ancient Egyptians. The new curriculum is engaging all groups of pupils with a range of opportunities to develop their writing.

- Finally, I explored the high rates of absence of disadvantaged pupils, White British pupils and those whose first language is English in 2016. You provided me with evidence to demonstrate how well you and members of the governing body have continued to take action to improve attendance. You follow up in detail those pupils who are late, occasionally absent or persistently absent. You have solid evidence of success. The high proportion of pupils with health issues resulting in prolonged absences adversely affected attendance in 2016. The vast majority of pupils attend regularly and this supports progress with their learning.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- a greater proportion of middle-attaining and most-able pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, reach the higher standards in reading and writing.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Rochdale. 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 observed teaching and learning alongside the headteacher and the deputy headteacher. I held meetings with senior leaders, middle leaders, members of the governing body, the designated safeguarding leader and the deputy designated safeguarding leader. I analysed 41 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 39 text responses from parents. I held a meeting with pupils and also spoke informally with pupils during breaks and in lessons. 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; and records relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance.