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Mrs Linda Cotton
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Dear Mrs Cotton

Short inspection of Norden Community Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 12 July 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 October 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You provide a safe and supportive learning environment and a broad curriculum that you enhance with exciting extra-curricular activities. These include clubs, such as dance, choir and trampolining, and educational visits to different places of worship, as well as longer trips to Wales and Cornwall. You promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.

Typically, pupils begin their time at the school with skills and knowledge that are below the level of those expected for their age. By the time they leave Year 6, the proportion of pupils who reach the expected standard or better in English and in mathematics is above the national average. This represents strong progress over their time in the school.

You have addressed the vast majority of the areas for improvement from the previous inspection. You make sure that teachers make effective use of adults who support pupils' learning. Teachers plan most lessons well and pupils are clear about their tasks. The pupils I observed, in the overwhelming majority of cases, focused carefully on their work and appropriate groups benefited from the guidance and questions that teaching assistants provided.

The evidence from workbooks and from assessment information shows that a large majority of pupils make good progress from their starting points in English and

mathematics. This is because you have further improved the quality of teaching since the last inspection. There have been some changes in staff in that time and you have also improved the systems you have for checking on the quality of teaching and on pupils' progress. You give teachers targets that relate to the school's improvement plans and regularly evaluate their performance. You give them areas to develop, when required, that focus on improving pupils' achievement. You have introduced a more thorough tracking system and you use your analysis of the information you record to hold staff more closely to account through pupils' progress meetings. You put support in place for pupils who need to catch up, such as 'pre-teaching' sessions, where small groups of pupils learn about a topic or skill before joining in with the whole class.

The majority of subject leaders now have a secure grasp of standards in their subject. They devise appropriate plans to improve teaching and learning based on their evaluations, including training for staff where appropriate. You acknowledge, however, that, in a small number of subjects other than English and mathematics, leaders do not include success criteria that precisely measure the expected achievement of pupils.

Since the last inspection, pupils, including boys in key stage 1, now typically make good progress in writing from their starting points. Attainment now more closely matches that in reading and mathematics and is improving towards the national average by the end of Year 2. By the end of Year 6, assessment information shows attainment that is above the national average. You provide experiences to stimulate pupils' interest in writing, such as visits from local celebrities and giving key stage 2 pupils opportunities to write reports that they broadcast on the school's own radio station. The teaching of English grammar, punctuation and spelling is also effective as the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard or better by the end of Year 6 is above the national average.

A large majority of parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, were very positive about the work of the school. They typically commented that Norden Community Primary School is a 'fantastic school' and said that staff support and nurture their children well. They also expressed their happiness with the progress their children make. There were very few negative comments.

Staff also had positive comments about the school when I spoke with them during the inspection. They especially appreciate the training that leaders provide, which makes an effective contribution to the good and improving quality of teaching in the school. They also said that they found senior leaders to be supportive.

I spoke with a group of Year 6 pupils during the inspection. They were polite and articulate and clearly showed they enjoy coming to school. They said that teachers mostly provide them with challenging work and they like the range of extra activities, such as clubs and educational trips. It is evident that you and your team do all you can to bring about their good all-round development. This also extends to looking after pupils' mental health, with activities such as peer massage and 'Zentangle Club', where they have the chance to do art activities designed to relieve

stress and encourage concentration. I spoke with some other key stage 2 pupils who were at the club. They spoke to me about developing the creative side of their brain and said that the activities made them feel calm.

You provide plenty of sporting activities, making effective use of the primary school sport premium. Your pupils' involvement in competitive sport at local and regional levels, especially in gymnastics, is very strong and very successful. You have a substantial trophy cabinet to prove it!

The local authority provides an understandably 'light-touch' level of support for you and your leaders. The local authority adviser has a good grasp of the strengths and areas for development of the school.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. As the designated safeguarding lead, you make referrals to outside agencies, such as social care, when required. You also follow up issues promptly and efficiently. Your record of vetting and checks on adults who work with pupils is suitable and compliant.

The culture of safeguarding in the school is strong. All governors have received relevant training and at least two have undertaken training in safer recruitment. Staff are knowledgeable about safeguarding procedures and pupils feel safe in school under their care. Pupils know how to stay safe, for example on the internet, because staff regularly give them the information they need. Pupils also know about different forms of bullying and say incidents are rare. You keep your safeguarding arrangements under review and, as a result of this, you have recently introduced a new electronic recording system, with a view to linking safeguarding concerns to other aspects of pupils' well-being, such as behaviour.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection I explored a number of key lines of enquiry which I shared with you at the start of the day. I have reported on some of these earlier in this letter.
- One focus I had was the progress of children in the early years. Children in the early years make good progress from starting points that are below those that are typical for their age and stage of development. The early years lead has brought about good improvements in the provision. The 'Proud Wall' gives children enhanced self-esteem as their best work is displayed there. Staff give children opportunities to write for specific purposes, such as their letters of congratulations to Her Majesty the Queen on her 91st birthday. The early years lead reports that there was great excitement among the children when they received a reply from Buckingham Palace. Children's workbooks show good development in writing. For example, most-able pupils write sentences such as 'I love to larn (learn) at sgool (school) and I love the prow d wull (proud wall).' Children also make good progress in mathematics. For instance, least-able pupils

accurately carry out calculations such as $4 + 1 = 5$. The early years lead has also designed the outdoor provision to support children's development in literacy and number, as well as such areas as physical development. All of these actions have contributed to a rise in the provisional proportion of children who achieved a good level of development in 2017. Leaders' assessment indicates that this figure is above the national average for the first time.

- Another key line of enquiry concerned writing in key stage 1, especially for girls. Most pupils, including girls, make good progress in writing from their starting points. In Year 1, for example, most-able pupils write sentences with correct spelling and advanced structures for their stage of development, such as 'When it is raining you have to stay inside.'
- In Year 2, I also saw evidence of pupils making good progress from their starting points. Pupils of middle ability write with a suitable structure, using correct punctuation and quite advanced vocabulary, such as "'What a masterpiece I've made!" he said.' Pupils also have opportunities to use their writing skills in other subjects. However, evidence in, for instance, topic workbooks indicated that pupils do similar work regardless of ability, with the most able in particular not attempting more challenging tasks. This was most noticeable when teachers provided them with a rigid structure that prevented them from making their own decisions about the content and layout of their writing.
- Recent unconfirmed assessment information for Year 2 indicates that there has been a decline in the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard or higher in reading, in writing and in mathematics. However, leaders anticipated the dip in performance, because the current year group has lower starting points than last year's cohort. There is also a higher number of pupils than last year who have specific needs or who joined the group during Year 2 with lower ability. Leaders have already put strategies in place, such as new books, to resource a more sharply focused approach to guided reading activities and a new scheme to teach spelling.
- Finally, governors have a clear view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They hold leaders to account robustly, asking pertinent questions, for example about standards and actions for improvement. They understand their responsibilities well.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they fully implement the newly devised strategies to secure better achievement by the end of Year 2 in English and mathematics
- they challenge the most able pupils in key stage 1 in writing in subjects other than English by giving them more opportunities to make their own choices on content and structure
- all subject leaders include in their action plans precise criteria by which they can measure success.

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

Yours sincerely

Mark Quinn
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I carried out short visits to the early years and key stage 1, which were joint activities with you and the deputy headteacher. I scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation summary, action plans for school improvement, records of incidents of bullying and misbehaviour, minutes of meetings of the governing body and records connected with the safeguarding of children. I held discussions with members of staff, governors and pupils from key stage 2. I had a discussion by telephone with a representative of the local authority. I analysed pupils' work and the school's own assessment information. I evaluated 66 responses received through Parent View, Ofsted's online survey. There were no other survey responses.