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Mr Gareth Linwood
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Linwood

Short inspection of Moss Bury Primary School and Nursery

Following my visit to the school on 1 February 2017 with Ofsted Inspector Janet Tomkins, 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 January 2013.

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 the other leaders and governors have established a safe, secure and inclusive school environment for pupils. Pupils and most of their parents agree that they are happy in school. You have established some excellent pastoral programmes to develop pupils' confidence and resilience that are preparing them well for the next stage in their education. As a result, the behaviour of pupils continues to be extremely good. Attitudes to learning and cooperation are excellent in lessons and behaviour around the school is impressive. Vulnerable pupils and those in the specialist unit thrive in school because of very effective teaching and provision to meet their specific needs.

On entry to the early years, many children have skill development that is below or well below that which is typical for their ages, particularly in language development. Your focus on developing key skills in literacy and numeracy means that by the end of Year 6, most groups of pupils are well prepared for secondary education. For example, disadvantaged pupils' overall attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is close to that of other pupils nationally.

At the last inspection some recommendations to improve the quality of teaching were made. You have developed these effectively. For example, work in books and the results in 2016 show that pupils' presentation and spelling have improved since

the last inspection. It is testament to the effectiveness of leadership that you have managed to maintain the good quality of teaching at a time when approximately half the teachers have been on maternity leave, there has been a major reorganisation of the senior leadership team and most of the governors are newly appointed to the governing body in the last year.

There are some areas of relative weakness that you and the staff are working to improve which I investigated during the inspection. Historically, the proportion of pupils that have reached the expected standard in phonics in Year 1 has been smaller than the national average; attendance has been below average and the skill development of pupils in subjects such as history, geography and science has not been as good as that in reading, writing and mathematics.

Safeguarding is effective.

An excellent culture of safety and security has been established across the school. For example, the procedures and records used to keep vulnerable pupils safe demonstrate the tenacity and the swift response of responsible adults in school. The records, procedures and links with outside agencies to keep pupils looked after by the local authority safe show that leaders are meticulous in meeting the needs of these pupils.

Records of bullying and misbehaviour and the action taken to resolve incidents are extremely thorough. There are few reported instances of bullying and nearly all pupils and parents report that they feel safe in school. You have provided opportunities for pupils to understand internet safety, bullying and racism, which are equipping them well for the future.

The leadership team has ensured that all safer recruitment arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. However, they could be better organised, so that those responsible can quickly oversee the administration of safeguarding. For example, the records of staff training are kept in one place, whereas the safer recruitment records are managed in the single central record, which is a mandatory requirement. You agree that it would be easier to command an oversight of the security of safer recruitment and training if they were all kept centrally in the single central record.

Inspection findings

- Effective steps have been taken by you and other leaders, with the support of the local authority, to improve the teaching and learning of reading in the early years and key stage 1. Following an audit of provision and staff training in the autumn term, phonics lessons were improved by reorganising teaching groups to better meet the ability of pupils. You agree that it is important that leaders and teachers strive to ensure that these changes, when pupils are young, are embedded in practice so that the impact on outcomes in reading by the end of Year 6 matches those in mathematics and writing.
- Observations of phonics lessons showed that these changes are already having a

positive impact. For example, assessment information indicates that more pupils are likely to reach the expected standard in phonics this year. Pupils were trying hard in most cases to read words and sounds. Less-able pupils were using phonics skills to help them to read words that they found difficult.

- Attendance this year has improved. However, the persistent absence of some groups, such as disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, remains too high. An examination of the procedures used by the school shows that they have been effective in improving the overall attendance of pupils and there are cases of individuals who are persistently absent coming to school more regularly.
- Results show that by the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics, the proportion of pupils that have learned in greater depth is lower than average. An examination of pupils' work shows that the most able make acceptable progress. For example, spelling, grammar and punctuation and the quality of stories have improved since September. Pupils are also improving their fluency in mathematics because of the sharp focus on number work. In Year 6, an examination of writing shows that there are some very sophisticated writers who are likely to gain the higher standard by the end of the year.
- We looked closely at the provision and outcomes of pupils in the specialist unit for pupils with hearing impairments and were impressed by the expertise and good-quality teaching received by these pupils. Pupils are fully included in all aspects of the life of the school and form good friendships with others. Some of these pupils have complex learning needs in addition to their hearing impairment. The unit leader has sensibly adapted the assessment procedures so that small steps made by pupils can be measured to demonstrate the good progress that they make.
- An examination of pupils' work in history, geography and science showed that pupils do not have sufficient opportunity to develop the subject-specific skills. For example, they do not carry out science experiments regularly enough. The acceptable coverage of specific knowledge, understanding and the application of literacy and numeracy skills in these subjects demonstrates that, overall, the school meets the requirements of the national curriculum.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the recent changes to the teaching and learning of phonics are continually refined, so that they become firmly embedded in practice
- they pay closer attention to the persistent absence of those groups of pupils where it is too high, to identify further strategies to improve their attendance
- pupils have more opportunity to develop subject-specific skills in history, geography and science.

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

Yours sincerely

Tim Bristow
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, other school leaders, the chair of governors, administration staff and pupils. Short visits were made to all classrooms where books were scrutinised. A range of documents, policies and assessment information was examined. Questionnaire responses from parents were also examined.