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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mr Christopher Holder
Headteacher
Lowfield Community Primary School
London Road
Sheffield
South Yorkshire
S2 4NJ

Dear Mr Holder

Short inspection of Lowfield Community Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 7 March 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 February 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Lowfield Primary School serves a truly multicultural community at the heart of the city of Sheffield. Pupils, many of whom are new to English, are quickly assimilated into the school, thanks to the very inclusive ethos effectively promoted by you and your governors. The school receives pupil premium for half of its pupils.

In 2016, pupils' attainment at the end of key stage 2 was below national averages in reading and writing but above national averages in mathematics. However, pupils' progress through key stage 2 was rapid in these subjects so that Lowfield was in the top 20% of schools for progress in key stage 2, when compared to others nationally. Progress in mathematics was particularly strong. Your current assessment information shows that in the majority of classes, current pupils are working below the levels typical for their age. However, their progress is good overall and in some year groups is rapid.

At the previous inspection, you were asked to improve rates of progress in key stage 1. Pupil mobility is high, with around 25% of pupils moving school between key stages. You and your staff are successfully meeting the complex language and social and emotional needs of the many pupils who join you at different times during the school year. In 2016, pupils' attainment and progress at the end of key stage 1 was below national averages. While those pupils who have been with you since Reception made secure progress, overall, boys and disadvantaged pupils did

not make enough progress from the early years to the end of Year 2. Leaders know that further improvements in teaching are still needed in key stage 1 to make sure more pupils start key stage 2 ready to learn.

At the previous inspection, you were also charged to improve the quality of teaching across the school. Since then you have introduced individual targets for pupils and raised teachers' expectations of what pupils will achieve. You have enabled teachers to improve their craft through regular and specific training and opportunities to visit other schools to observe strong practices. As a result, the quality of teaching across school is improving, although it is currently more effective in the early years and key stage 2.

Since the previous inspection, you have worked closely with parents to improve attendance and reduce persistent absence. You have introduced a raft of incentives and rewards to encourage pupils to come to school regularly and on time. You have had success in improving the attendance of some pupils and attendance rates have improved overall. Despite this, a few boys continue to be persistently absent and attendance is slightly below the national average.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your governors have ensured that detailed safeguarding policies underpin robust safeguarding procedures. Staff in the early years have ensured that the statutory welfare requirements are met. Risk assessments are in place for all aspects of school activity and staff are vigilant. All staff are aware of the duty to protect pupils who might be at risk from radical views.

Inspection findings

- You provide strong and ambitious leadership for all staff and pupils at Lowfield and have the respect and affection of parents and governors. You are a national leader of education with a track record of effectively supporting other schools.
- Governors are knowledgeable about the strengths and weaknesses in the school. They are effective in their roles, helping to promote the school's values and to raise the profile of education in the community.
- Teaching in the early years is highly successful. The vast majority of children arrive at school from a large number of pre-school settings, with skills and abilities below those typically seen. Due to very effective leadership, and focused provision and teaching over time, children make rapid progress from their starting points. The proportion of children achieving a good level of development has improved for three consecutive years and, in 2016, was just above the national average.
- As a result of leaders' ongoing support and training, most teaching is effective in meeting the needs of pupils over time. Teachers ensure pupils are working on tasks that are well matched to their abilities. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are high and pupils are rising to these expectations, taking pride in their work and presenting it well. Teaching assistants are providing

effective support to enable pupils with low prior attainment or those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities to achieve.

- You have made pupils' learning in reading, writing and mathematics the cornerstone of your work, successfully equipping pupils with the skills they need to access education at high school. You and your staff have ensured that all pupils have a secure knowledge of other faiths and cultures and that their understanding of what it means to live in modern Britain is well developed. As a result, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is a strength of the school. Pupils' artwork on display around the school shows attention to detail and many opportunities to develop artistic skills through a range of media. Pupils speak highly of their learning in physical education lessons. However, pupils' attainment in science is below national averages at the end of key stages 1 and 2. Pupils' books show that they do not have sufficient opportunities to use and apply their scientific skills in practical situations.
- Pupils' attitude to learning is a joy to behold because of a consistently ambitious can-do attitude successfully promoted by school leaders. You insist on a 'no excuses' culture and believe pupils can make progress no matter what challenges they face. Thus, the vast majority of pupils fulfil their potential by the end of key stage 2, and, importantly, are happy and secure in their sense of belonging at Lowfield.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teaching and learning in key stage 1 improve further, so that a greater proportion of boys and disadvantaged pupils start key stage 2 ready to learn
- planning in science is improved so that pupils are able to develop, use and apply their scientific knowledge to explore and investigate through practical activities
- they continue to work with families and carers to diminish the amount of persistent absence, ensuring that all pupils come to school regularly and on time.

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

Yours sincerely

Lesley Butcher
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this one-day inspection, I was able to discuss the work of the school with you and your staff. We visited classrooms together to observe teaching and

learning. I was able to look at pupils' work in books and to speak with pupils throughout the day. I listened to pupils read. Discussions with the school improvement partner and five members of the governing body helped to provide me with additional information. School documentation, assessment information, policies and information posted on the school website were also taken into account. I took into account a letter from a parent and 10 parents' responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I looked at the 19 responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire, and 18 pupils' responses. My main areas of focus during the inspection included checking: what leaders have done to improve the quality of teaching across the school; how well leaders have improved standards in mathematics; the effectiveness of teaching in key stage 1 and the quality of learning across the curriculum.