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13 March 2018

Mr S Tonge  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Tonge

### **Short inspection of Accrington Spring Hill Community Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 27 February 2018, 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 2014.

#### **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 strong leadership and have steered the school successfully through a period of change with resilience. Governors and staff support you well and share your high aspirations for teaching and learning. There is a happy atmosphere at your school, and the positive ethos is evident in the sense of purpose in all lessons.

Governors have a clear awareness of the school's strengths and areas for development. They are knowledgeable because they challenge leaders to provide the best possible outcomes for pupils. The local authority ensures appropriate support and knows the school's strengths and weaknesses well. Leaders are proud of the wider opportunities available for pupils. Music provision is strong, especially the teaching of singing, and this links well with the school's priority to develop communication and language.

Your pupils are a credit to the school. They are polite and keen to speak about their learning. They also display good manners. Relationships between staff and pupils are strong and, as a result, pupils are proud to be part of Spring Hill. They are particularly pleased by the impact that their work with the pupil's parliament is having on many aspects of school life. The majority of the parents and carers whom I spoke to are positive about the quality of education the school provides for their children.

At your last inspection, an area for improvement was to develop pupils' handwriting across the school. Scrutiny of pupils' work and observations in lessons show that their handwriting is now consistently good. Inspectors asked you to raise standards in writing. Assessments are now used well to ensure that the teaching of writing is more closely

matched to the abilities of pupils. Teachers effectively use discussion to motivate pupils through talk and build vocabulary before they begin their writing. During my meeting with pupils, they told me how much they enjoy writing, especially on themes linked to class novels. There was evidence of progress over time in relation to pupils' use of punctuation and vocabulary and in their organisation of writing. There is a consistent and structured approach to the teaching of the subject, which enables pupils to complete extended pieces of writing to a high standard. It is clear from the work in pupils' books that they make good progress.

During the inspection, we discussed the next steps required to enable the school to improve further. While the teaching of phonics has improved, we agreed that leaders should continue to evaluate and review recent strategies in the teaching of phonics and spelling to ensure consistently high standards across all year groups.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Records are detailed and leaders are quick to follow up any concerns. Governors check and review the safeguarding work of the school effectively. Staff are vigilant about recording any concerns that arise about pupils' welfare.

There is a culture of safety in the school. This is strengthened by the caring relationships between staff and pupils. Pupils spoken to during the inspection said that they feel very safe and know whom to go to if they have any worries. They also said that there is no bullying and they are confident that their worries would be taken seriously and dealt with by staff.

### **Inspection findings**

- We discussed a number of key issues that this inspection would focus on. The first of these was how leaders are improving outcomes in reading across Reception and key stage 1. In Reception, you regularly evaluate the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. This ensures that the daily focused teaching activities match children's needs. This has resulted in leaders in the early years raising expectations and implementing new strategies, including for pupils who speak English as an additional language. There are also clear strategies in place that develop early reading. These are linked to the books and stories read to the children by adults in the early years. Teachers create effective learning environments that support children's learning, with opportunities to read letters and key words, for instance when playing phonics bingo. Teachers and teaching assistants also model key language when interacting with children. As a result, children's reading skills in the early years are improving.
- In key stage 1, effective training in reading and teachers' use of questioning have led to more opportunities for the development of comprehension and inference skills. Teaching assistants deliver extra sessions on reading and communication for pupils who need to catch up. Leaders have improved the quality of books available in the library, classrooms and for reading at home. As a result, pupils are more engaged and enjoy reading. Teachers analyse pupils' reading assessments to identify the key reading skills which need strengthening. They plan daily lessons that focus on pupils'

development of these key skills. As a result of recent improvements, current pupils are making better progress from their starting points and are becoming competent readers.

- The next key issue we considered was how leaders have improved outcomes in phonics. You have reorganised lessons in phonics and writing in key stage 1 so that they complement each other. As a result, pupils are able to apply their phonics skills to their writing more effectively. The teaching of phonics is now becoming consistent and systematic across Reception and key stage 1. Pupils use and apply their phonics skills effectively across a range of subjects. This was evident from observations and written work seen during the inspection. Pupils who need additional support receive high-quality teaching in small groups, delivered by skilled support staff. There is also evidence of pupils correctly writing dictated sentences and increasingly complex words as they make progress. Pupils also have the opportunity to practise forming letters correctly and develop independent writing if they have the necessary knowledge and skills. Some strategies to help pupils with their phonics skills and to develop their spelling are not consistent across the whole school. We therefore discussed the need to ensure consistently high standards in the way phonics and spelling are taught in all year groups to ensure that all pupils make the best possible progress.
- Another key issue that we examined was the attendance of pupils. You follow up pupils who are late, occasionally absent or persistently absent. You have solid evidence of success in improving attendance. You monitor the attendance of all pupils very closely, particularly those who are vulnerable, and you work very effectively with outside agencies to offer support to the families of pupils with low attendance. As a consequence, there has been an improvement across the school, and rates of attendance are now just below those of other schools nationally. You ensure that good attendance is celebrated and challenge unauthorised absences strongly. Despite this, a small number of pupils miss out on some learning at times because their parents choose to take unauthorised holidays. Leaders recognise that they have further work to do to address this issue.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to evaluate and review recent strategies in the teaching of phonics and spelling to ensure consistently high standards across all year groups
- the proportion of pupils persistently absent from school continues to decrease.

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

Yours sincerely

Simon Hunter  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I spoke with pupils, both formally and informally, about their work and school life. I held meetings with you and with senior staff to discuss improvements in their areas of responsibility. I looked at learning in pupils' books. I also spoke to the local authority improvement partner.

I reviewed documentation, which included your evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses and the school development plan. I spoke with parents at the start of the school day and considered six responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View.

I visited classes, together with you, to observe pupils' learning. I met with the chair of governors to discuss aspects of school leadership and management. I reviewed a range of documentation about safeguarding, including the school's record of checks undertaken on newly appointed staff.