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Miss Lynne France
Headteacher
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Dear Miss France

Short inspection of Standish Lower Ground St Anne's CE Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 23 February 2016, 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 July 2011.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. Since your arrival in September 2013, you have established a clear vision for the school, building on previous success and strengthening the school further. Staff, parents, pupils and governors are highly appreciative of your approach and rightly hold you in high regard. Based on your, and the school's, Christian values, you have developed a strong ethos of care and love for pupils that is evident throughout the school.

Staff share your passion for ensuring that pupils achieve the best they can, both in their learning and as well-rounded individuals; they have confidence and trust in your leadership and feel well supported. The vast majority of parents who responded to Parent View (Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents), or spoke to me in the playground, are positive about school. Parents particularly comment that their children are happy to come to school. Comments such as 'staff are friendly and approachable' and 'I am listened to' are typical examples of how parents feel about the school. This is a happy, purposeful school, where pupils, parents and staff have a real sense of belonging to a school 'family'.

Since the previous inspection, pupils' progress has accelerated across the school. The majority of pupils make good progress by the end of Key Stage 2, including disadvantaged pupils and those pupils who have special educational needs or disability. However you are not complacent and are keen to ensure that all pupils

make equally strong progress in all subjects. To this end, you have identified a need to continue to improve progress further in writing and phonics (letters and the sounds they make). The plans you have put in place can already be seen in pupils' improved learning of these skills.

At the previous inspection, inspectors identified a need to hasten pupils' progress further by ensuring that work set throughout lessons accurately matched the needs of all groups of pupils. They also required the school to make sure that pupils quickly settled to their work in lessons, so that they are as productive as possible. Leaders have addressed all of these aspects effectively.

- The work set is correctly matched to the needs of pupils. This is particularly evident for those pupils who are disadvantaged or who have special educational needs or disability. Despite the school having a small number of pupils, mixed-age classes are regularly divided up into single-age or ability groups so that teaching, for example in writing and phonics, can be closely matched to what pupils need to learn next.
- Well-established routines ensure that pupils come into school promptly and without fuss at the start of the day. They are similarly quick to settle and begin their lessons after breaks and lunch. Pupils are eager to learn and, as a result, are keen to start lessons and get down to work.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding is robust. In all areas, there are good systems in place which are understood by staff. Regular and relevant training for staff is undertaken and up to date. Leaders have made effective links with other agencies and are determined to ensure that pupils are kept safe and their welfare needs are met.

Pupils say they feel very safe and well cared for in school. They are assured that adults will help them if needed. Pupils talked knowledgeably about the ways that staff have taught them to keep safe and confidently described their understanding about how to ensure that they stay safe in a range of personal and online situations. The vast majority of parents feel that you and the staff keep their children safe and well looked after. As a result, pupils are very happy and keen to come to school.

Inspection findings

- You have an accurate view of the school's strengths and the areas that need further development. Your school's self-evaluation and development documents are honest and transparent. They are presented in a succinct way that makes it very clear what the school's priorities are. Everyone in school is clear about the direction in which they are heading and, as a result, you and your leadership team have very good capacity for further improvement.
- You have ensured that you know each teacher's strengths and areas for development accurately; as a result you are confident about who your strong teachers are and those who still need some support and nurturing.

Teachers and teaching assistants feel supported and encouraged to take up a range of development opportunities. This has been particularly valuable for pupils, who benefit from good-quality phonics sessions led by teaching assistants as well as teachers.

- Governors are knowledgeable and play an active and supportive role in evaluating the school's effectiveness; they know the school well. You are well supported by the governing body, as their own skills and talents have been employed extremely well to benefit the school. Like you and your staff, governors are passionate about achieving the best for pupils, and, to this end, they are confident to challenge where needed.
- The information you gather about how pupils are progressing over the year is thorough and detailed. You set pupils challenging, but achievable, targets which send a clear message of high expectations for all. Staff and governors use information about pupils' progress effectively to identify which pupils or groups are making progress and which need some additional support or challenge. You lead your half-termly pupil progress meetings meticulously, making sure that all staff feel responsible for every pupil's learning. You give them an opportunity to reflect on how they could further adapt their teaching to meet their pupils' needs.
- You identified that two key priority areas for further development are: to improve the progress and attainment of pupils in writing, particularly in Key Stage 1, and to accelerate the number of pupils reaching the expected standard in phonics. This is to ensure that all pupils make the most progress that they can. To this end, you have taken decisive and dynamic action. This has been well received by staff and is already having an impact on speeding up the progress of pupils in these areas.
- You have made significant improvements in attendance and punctuality since the last inspection, as there are now strong monitoring systems in place. As a result, attendance is above the national average. There is a firm, but fair, stance on attendance and lateness, complemented by a range of rewards that are well supported by staff. You still have a few pupils who are persistently absent from school, but efforts to support families have resulted in some very successful improvements.
- Teachers use their subject knowledge well to provide engaging lessons that interest and motivate pupils. Teachers often encourage pupils to explain what they are learning and ask good questions which extend pupils' thinking. Pupils told me that they enjoy learning and know that they learn best when activities or tasks are challenging. One pupil said, 'I feel proud of myself when I have solved a challenging sum.' When pupils make mistakes, teachers use these positively as an opportunity to develop learning further. Work in pupils' books shows that progress is consistent in all subjects. However, pupils' presentation of their work, particularly their handwriting, is inconsistent and can be untidy.
- The promotion of pupils' personal development, behaviour, and spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is very positive. A great deal of learning in these areas is centred on the core spiritual values that pervade the curriculum, but also on the way adults and pupils respectfully interact with each other. Behaviour is good; pupils are polite, kind and thoughtful. Pupils thrive in their learning and as all-round individuals.

- The quality of the curriculum is of a good standard. Topics and themes are well thought out to bring learning alive and interest pupils. Many opportunities are planned to provide 'real-life' experiences for pupils and to give learning a purpose. For example, pupils who were writing instructions on how to make biscuits had made shortbread the previous day. This resulted in pupils writing confident, meaningful instructions based on their first-hand knowledge. Every opportunity is offered to practise English and mathematical skills across a range of subjects.
- Children make good progress in the early years, the majority from starting points that are lower than usual for children of their age, particularly in communication, literacy and number. Children are offered a wide range of stimulating learning experiences that they visibly enjoy. As a result, children are happy and keen to chatter about their learning with adults and with each other. Adults have delightful relationships with children and teach and support them well in their learning. I agree with you that, although there is much to celebrate within early years provision, there needs to be a continued focus to capitalise on any possible ways for children, particularly those who are disadvantaged, to get the best possible start.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that they:

- further improve pupils' attainment and progress in writing and phonics
- develop a consistent approach and high expectations for the presentation of pupils' work, especially their handwriting
- explore every opportunity to ensure that all children in the early years get the best start to their school career.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Sue Eastwood
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, your deputy headteacher and members of your middle leadership team. I also met with pupils and the Chair of the Governing Body and two governors. I had a telephone conversation with a representative of Wigan local authority. We visited seven lessons and I scrutinised pupils' work. I took account of six responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as the views of five parents I spoke to before school. I also took account of 14 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire. I observed pupils' behaviour during the school day. I looked at a number of documents, including information about pupils' achievement, your school self-evaluation and school improvement plan, and documents and checks relating to safeguarding.