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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mrs Lyndsey Glass
Headteacher
The Cobbs Infant and Nursery School
Wood Lane
Appleton
Warrington
Cheshire
WA4 3DB

Dear Mrs Glass

Short inspection of The Cobbs Infant and Nursery School

Following my visit to the school on 27 September 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 inspection since the short inspection in October 2013 and it was the first full inspection since the school was judged to be good in June 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education since the last inspection. Cobbs Infants is an improving school which is overwhelmingly popular with parents. Pupils' achievement and attendance has risen in the last four years. Since your appointment in spring 2015 you have established a culture of high ambition and high expectations. You have also been successful, according to the governors I spoke with, in increasing governors' involvement in the school. As a result they feel more informed about the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement.

The areas for improvement from the previous full and short inspections were to make sure that the school site is secure, to improve the evaluation of children's skills and knowledge as they first start school in Nursery and to improve the quality of teaching. New fences, electronic keypads and weekly monitoring of the site have been successful in improving the security for pupils. There is evidence in pupils' books that teachers' feedback, including marking, has helped pupils to improve their work. Pupils' higher attainment in reading, writing and mathematics indicates that teaching is more effective. There is a more accurate assessment system to identify children's attainment on entry into Nursery and Reception. This indicates that children enter with the skills, understanding and knowledge that are at least broadly in line with those typical for three-year-olds. Overall there has been good improvement since the previous inspections.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a culture of vigilance throughout the school. Staff check visitors' credentials as they enter the school, and check staff, volunteers and governors' suitability to work with children. Staff are vigilant to make sure small concerns are thoroughly documented: anything that is 'strange or different' is passed on to the school's designated lead for safeguarding. You and the staff consult and share information well with outside agencies such as local safeguarding teams, social care, medical professionals and the police to make sure each child is protected. Children who are looked after have good levels of support and plans in place to make sure they attend, achieve and are protected. You do not, however, provide an annual report to the governing body regarding the provision and outcomes for this group of pupils.

There is a mismatch between the safeguarding practice in school and the information on the school's website. Staff are able to identify some of the main types of abuse and the symptoms of abuse which can be identified in pupils. They are aware of their statutory duty to protect pupils from threats from extremism and radicalisation and in relation to the use of mobile devices and are realistic that incidents can happen anywhere and to anyone. The policy on the website is out of date, not renewed frequently enough and does not contain the government's required information. It also does not reflect well enough the school's effective practice.

Since the last inspection site security had been tightened, contributing to a safer environment for staff and pupils and enabling pupils to make the most of the wonderful outdoor environment. During playtimes children thrive. A large number of staff supervise the outdoor area, which allows pupils to play harmoniously in an active and inquisitive way. Well-established first aid procedures ensure that children are safe. All parents responding to the survey agreed that their children feel safe at the school.

Inspection findings

- There has been a four-year increase in pupils' attendance. The published information about the school indicates that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are disadvantaged have much lower attendance than other pupils nationally. In the 2015–2016 academic year, attendance for both of these groups increased. This is partly because of the headteacher's new system of rewarding high levels of attendance and partly because of staff's successful work with individual families. No disadvantaged pupil in 2015–2016 was recorded as being persistently absent from school. There was a high level of persistent absence for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities but this is mainly because of significant medical issues.
- Leaders have successfully overseen an increase in ambition and challenge for pupils. There has been a three-year increase in the proportion of children attaining a good level of development by the end of Reception.

In 2016 almost 80% of pupils attained a good level of development. There has been similar success in phonics. From 65% in 2014 there has been a significant rise in the proportion of pupils attaining the expected level in the phonics check and in 2016 almost all pupils read at the expected level.

- Up until summer 2015, there was a decline in reading in the proportion of the most able pupils attaining the higher Level 3. There has been greater liaison and communication with the junior school which has helped to check the accuracy of assessments at the end of Year 2. In the most recent national tests, which are more difficult than in previous years, the most able pupils attained well in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils' work to the end of summer 2016 indicates that the most able pupils made good progress in their history, English and mathematics work. In science, religious education and geography, however, their progress was restricted because of low-level worksheets which required pupils to write or think very little. There was also very little evidence of scientific exploration and investigation. This lower challenge was also replicated in the teaching that you and I observed.
- Disadvantaged pupils attain well. There has been a steady increase in their attainment over the last few years. There has been, however, a decline in the attainment of the most able disadvantaged pupils. The proportion attaining Level 3 in English and mathematics up to summer 2015 declined steadily. This was partly because most of the spending from the pupil premium grant was assigned to lower-attaining pupils to help them catch up to the attainment of their peers. Leaders make sure that this small group of pupils make good progress and they track their progress as individuals, making sure that they do not fall behind, but they do not as yet do as much as they could to accelerate their progress.
- Governors that I spoke with have a good understanding of the improvements made to teaching and learning and of the standards that children achieve. They are committed, knowledgeable and have good oversight over the school's work. They are not afraid of challenging leaders or asking searching questions to make leaders think more deeply about the school's provision. There is a lack of oversight of the school's website. The government's requirements about what should be published on the website are not met. The special educational needs school offer, the pupil premium strategy and the child protection policy do not meet requirements. The equality statements in three policies are not compliant because they do not refer to all of the protected characteristics from the 2010 Equality Act. The information about governors' roles, business interests, and attendance at meetings is not available for parents.
- From the teaching we observed together, I know that you have an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses in provision for pupils. There is no current improvement plan in place. You understand that this must be rectified quickly. There is, however, a thorough review of the improvement plan which finished in August 2016. You do, however, have a good understanding of what needs further improvement, focus and development in the school.

- The local authority provides limited support and guidance to the school because the school is regarded as low-risk and high-performing. It has provided effective help regarding health and safety and site security.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- there is an effective system in place to publish the required information on the school's website and that the content of policies reflects the school's practice and meets national requirements
- the achievement of the most able disadvantaged pupils improves by making better use of the pupil premium grant
- the quality of activities given to pupils to complete improves in science, religious education and geography to enable pupils, particularly the most able, to use and apply their skills.

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

Yours sincerely

Allan Torr
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I toured the school site with you and we made five short visits to lessons. I looked through some pupils' work from last academic year and took into account the pupils' attainment from the end of Summer 2016. I took into account the 136 parents who responded to Parent View and talked with some pupils at breaktime. I met with two members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.

I considered what the school has done to raise the quality of teaching since the last inspection and the security of the school site. I reviewed how effectively the pupil premium grant is being spent to support disadvantaged pupils. I looked closely at the rates of attendance of disadvantaged pupils and of those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.