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Mrs Sandra Lloyd
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Dear Mrs Lloyd

Short inspection of Prenton Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 5 October 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 April 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. The culture of Prenton Primary School is rooted in your mission statement, 'Believe to Achieve.' You and your staff are determined to build pupils' aspirations and resilience so that they can overcome barriers and become successful and self-confident young citizens. You lead with integrity and have strong principles that you expect all your staff to model. Since the last inspection, you have extended the school's leadership team and thereby developed the school's capacity to sustain improvements. A shared commitment to pupils' well-being and success underpins the school's work. The parents and grandparents with whom I spoke hold the school in high regard and recognise how hard the staff work. You encourage your pupils to be thoughtful and empathetic. Prenton is a 'school of sanctuary' in which pupils' understanding of how they can contribute positively to society is developed well.

At the last inspection, the school was asked to raise attainment in mathematics to match the high standards that pupils achieved in reading and writing, by improving the mathematics curriculum and quality of teaching. You addressed this issue and attainment rose strongly in mathematics from 2012 to 2015. Pupils continued to achieve well in reading, while standards in writing have been significantly higher than those found nationally for several years. In 2016, the first year of the new national curriculum tests, unvalidated data indicates that the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standards in mathematics and in reading were below the provisional national averages. The 2016 cohort included an untypically high

proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and a significant number of pupils narrowly missed achieving the expected standard. You have analysed pupils' performance in detail and identified those areas where pupils experienced difficulties. You took immediate action to adapt teaching so that pupils are better prepared to read and understand more demanding questions in test conditions.

Teaching was judged to be good at the last inspection and inspectors considered that it could be improved further by ensuring that challenge was consistently matched to pupils' needs and that learning progressed at a good pace. During this inspection, I saw teachers adapting activities so that they were accessible to pupils who found concepts difficult to master. However, on a few occasions the most able pupils were not stretched as much as they could have been. The books I reviewed of the most able pupils who left school in the summer 2016 showed that, over time, they were challenged effectively to succeed. This was particularly evident in writing, where they responded assiduously to the feedback provided by their teachers. They developed an extensive range of vocabulary and showed mature competence in adapting their sentence structures for different audiences and purposes.

You have used pupil premium funding thoughtfully to meet the needs of disadvantaged pupils, especially those who have fallen behind in their learning or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Many of these pupils make good progress in response to the specific support they receive. The needs of the most able disadvantaged pupils have not been explored quite as thoroughly.

Governors share your determination to remove barriers for learning and ensure that pupils enjoy school. They ensure that school improvement plans are kept on track and are aware of the school's performance. They had not realised that the school's website did not meet current requirements for the provision of information.

Safeguarding is effective.

The school's safeguarding policy has been revised to meet current requirements and all staff have received appropriate training. The principle that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility is reinforced and echoed by staff, irrespective of their roles. Rigorous checks are made on the suitability of all staff appointed to the school. New staff receive a thorough induction that leaves them in no doubt as to what steps they should take to ensure pupils' safety. Visitors are briefed on the school's safeguarding procedures as they enter the building. The school grounds are secure and well maintained.

Leaders work hard to ensure that pupils and their families receive timely support from external agencies, including in response to child protection issues; they are persistent in following up concerns. All parents who responded to the Ofsted survey agreed that the school keeps pupils safe. Pupils with whom I spoke or who completed their survey affirmed that this is the case. The school has done a lot of work to ensure that there is zero-tolerance of bullying, including homophobic bullying and online bullying. This helps pupils to keep themselves safe and to

contribute to safety in the school.

Inspection findings

- The school's leaders have maintained a strong focus on improving the teaching of mathematics. They identified that while pupils achieve well in arithmetic, they are less proficient in answering questions that demand a higher level of reasoning. They have researched successful approaches and introduced new programmes in order to develop pupils' reasoning skills. Staff have received training and are confident to adapt their teaching to improve pupils' mathematical thinking. Through regular monitoring and review, leaders are ensuring that teachers use consistent approaches so that pupils' skills develop sequentially.
- Leaders take well-considered actions in response to their analysis of pupils' performance. A good example of this is shown in the reconfiguration of classes in key stage 1. In 2016, the proportion of pupils attaining expected standards at the end of Year 2 was higher than the provisional national average in reading and similar to the national average in mathematics and writing. However, the proportions achieving at greater depth were below average in each subject. The school has reduced class sizes in Year 2 to enable pupils to receive teaching that more precisely meets their needs. Although this is a relatively new initiative, benefits are already being observed and pupils' progress is accelerating.
- Most pupils enjoy reading. In key stage 2 they progress to tackling challenging literature including poetry written during the first world war and a Shakespearean play. Those pupils who read to me were developing the skills of working out the meanings of words by reading on and back in the text to find clues. Younger pupils use their phonics knowledge well to break down unfamiliar words. A few parents commented that some of the books pupils take home are not very appealing. School leaders are replacing the stock of books and have allocated capital to remodel the library so that more pupils are encouraged to read for pleasure. Enticing reading areas have been developed in classrooms. In the early years, children are keen to investigate books that are linked to different activities, such as looking at a 'Fireman Sam' story to accompany their play with the toy fire engines.
- The pupil premium funding that the school receives to support disadvantaged pupils is allocated to a range of specific projects to raise their attainment. Some of the funding has been used to enable smaller classes to be created and to provide specific support for pupils who find learning difficult. Access to residential visits and extra-curricular activities are also funded. The school's data indicates that this funding is having a positive impact on raising attainment for individuals. Consequently, the differences in performance between disadvantaged pupils and that of others nationally are diminishing, especially in writing. The use of pupil premium to support the most able disadvantaged pupils is not as clearly defined. Outcomes for the most able disadvantaged pupils are not as strong in mathematics as in other subjects.
- Most pupils attend regularly and the proportion who are regularly absent is much lower than that found nationally. Leaders work hard with families to remove any barriers to good attendance. Some parents are particularly appreciative of the considerable efforts taken by staff to support their children when they have been

absent for prolonged periods due to illness.

- Developing pupils' resilience and confidence is a key priority within the school's concise and sharply focused improvement plan. Teachers have enthusiastically adopted a whole-school approach to encouraging pupils' curiosity. This helps pupils to think about big issues and learn how to discuss them. Pupils regularly reflect on life in modern Britain and, through events such as the election of head boy and girl, take their democratic responsibilities seriously. The head boy's manifesto commitment to develop pupil voice has been realised through his feedback box: pupils know that their suggestions are heard and debated.
- The curriculum has been refreshed since the last inspection. Visits to places of interest are particularly popular with pupils. Year 6 had recently visited the Imperial War Museum and produced some high-quality writing as a result that showed their empathy and historical understanding. Pupils' sporting and musical talents are a source of considerable pride.
- Pupils are encouraged to make a difference and improve their community, for instance through the school's '20th Kid' initiative that rewards those who consistently notice and take action where small improvements can be made within the school.
- Leaders regularly seek and act upon parents' feedback. Most parents are highly positive about the quality of teaching in the school. A few parents raised issues, through the survey, about the homework their children receive and whether it is sufficiently challenging. The school monitors homework closely and has provided extra support to parents so that they can help their children at home, particularly with mathematics. However, not all parents insist that their children complete the work that is set for them. Homework clubs, partially funded through the pupil premium, are making a difference but some pupils need to redouble their efforts to complete work at home.
- The governors bring a wide range of skills and experience to the school and have a good understanding of the community they serve. They provide school leaders with challenge and support in appropriate balance. The school's policies are reviewed critically by governors but they have not kept a check on whether the website complies with requirements for the publication of information. At the time of the inspection, the school's website included outdated policies as the new versions had not been published. This meant that the information provided to parents did not reflect provision within the school. Some information about governance was also missing. Leaders took swift action to resolve this situation.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the most able pupils are challenged fully, and the needs of the most able disadvantaged pupils are considered as closely as those of less-able pupils eligible for pupil premium
- the school's website is kept under review to ensure that it meets requirements
- pupils develop reasoning skills in mathematics so that higher proportions meet and exceed age-related expectations

- the school continues to encourage parents to support pupils' homework.

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

Yours sincerely

Shirley Gornall
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I paid particular attention to the following matters: how effectively the school promotes a culture of safeguarding; the impact of the school's spending of pupil premium on attendance and outcomes for disadvantaged pupils; the quality of leadership and teaching of mathematics; the effectiveness of the teaching of reading; the school's work to develop pupils' aspirations and the effectiveness of the school's work in partnership with parents.

I discussed the impact of the school's work with you and your deputy headteacher, three governors and the school improvement associate who evaluates your work. I also met those teachers with responsibility for leading English and mathematics and a teacher who coordinates specific programmes to support pupils. I had a telephone discussion with a representative from the local authority. I visited a range of classes and met with small groups of pupils from Years 2 and 6 who read to me and shared their views about the school. I also reviewed the 18 responses to the pupil questionnaire. I looked at pupils' books in lessons and also considered a sample of the work completed by pupils who left Year 6 in summer 2016. I spoke to 18 parents and grandparents as they brought their children to school and considered the views of the 40 respondents to the Parent View questionnaire. During the day, I spoke informally with various staff and reviewed responses to the staff questionnaire. I read a range of documents including the school improvement plan and self-evaluation, feedback from parents following school events and data about pupils' performance. I considered safeguarding policies and processes, including the school's single central record of the suitability of adults to work in the school.