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Mrs Angela Afflick
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Dear Mrs Afflick

Short inspection of Westvale Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 29 November 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 2012.

This school continues to be good.

Support for pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare remain a central strength of the school. Pupils contribute well to school life through roles including school council and playground buddies. They know how to keep themselves and others safe. They understand that their views are welcomed by staff and leaders. Pupils behave well in lessons, in corridors and on the playground. They are developing much respect for people who are different from themselves.

You have made sure that the teaching of subjects in the school is even more varied and exciting for pupils. Pupils develop great confidence and skill through their participation in a wide range of sports, musical activities and foreign language study. There is a strong focus across the school on the value of reading, with classes studying authors such as Michael Morpurgo and Roald Dahl with enthusiasm and understanding. The contribution of different professional artists is celebrated widely at the school, with pupils' artwork inspired by the creativity of Warhol, Mondrian and Mackintosh among others.

Given your high expectations for the school to become even more successful, you have taken a number of important steps to keep moving the school forward. You have made sure that Westvale is not a school that works alone. For example, you have improved staff access to training. Staff have good opportunities for linking with other schools. They are increasingly learning about successful teaching from

across the region and nationally. This is benefiting staff in the early years as much as colleagues in key stages 1 and 2. You welcome experts from outside the school to visit and assist you in reviewing the quality of education being provided. As a result, you have a clear and accurate view of what the school is doing well and where further improvement is needed.

You were appointed as headteacher from September 2015. Previously you held the role of deputy headteacher at the school. Both you and the previous headteacher have responded well to recommendations made at the last inspection. You have made sure that staff are more successful at deepening pupils' understanding as well as moving them on to new learning when needed. Pupils are benefiting from the increased opportunities to develop independence at school.

You have successfully followed the recommendation that leaders fully consider the impact of teaching on pupils' progress when reviewing the work of the school. This is giving you a clear view of pupils' achievement across classes and a good understanding of where more attention is needed. Given the many recent changes of staff, we discussed the need to make sure that the most able pupils are challenged well in all classes, including in their writing.

Safeguarding is effective.

Your high expectations for the school extend to the care and protection of pupils. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. You have made sure that staff learn from a wide range of training about child protection from within and outside of your local authority. This is giving staff a well-informed and up-to-date knowledge of issues such as sexual exploitation and female genital mutilation (FGM). Staff are alert to the main types of abuse. For example, they know how to spot and report when pupils' needs are being neglected. In response to pupils' concerns about online dangers when at home and in the community, you have given an extra focus to advising pupils, families and staff about safe online behaviour.

Staff, leaders and governors understand their safeguarding responsibilities as set out in local and national guidance documents. Where pupils and families are at risk of being harmed away from school, leaders take their responsibilities seriously. Staff know how to report any concerns they may have about adults who work or live with children. They link well with other agencies and make sure that the school is as supportive as possible of any work to protect pupils. Records kept by the school about safeguarding are maintained securely and shared well with other professionals.

Policies and procedures for safeguarding work well in practice and keep pupils safe at the school. Nevertheless, we discussed how you could make sure that the school's child protection policy gives an even clearer overview of the agreed safeguarding arrangements and wider policies that the school has already set in place.

Inspection findings

- Westvale continues to be a good school because of the careful and considered work of leaders to develop, support and value the abilities of pupils and staff, and to work collaboratively with families. Teaching is good. Many successful steps are taken by staff to support pupils' personal development and to make sure that pupils' behaviour is good. Pupils are kept safe. From their starting points they achieve well across subjects.
- Your appointment as headteacher has set the school on a renewed path for the future. Because you know the school and the local community well, you are clear about the challenges that pupils face in their lives. Such insights make you even more determined to see individuals flourish at Westvale. Pupils now benefit from a wide range of learning. Artists and authors are highly valued as inspiration for pupils across the school. Pupils learn to play a ukulele. They are taught to handle large spiders, slugs and centipedes. They enjoy extra opportunities to deepen their understanding of number through online resources and gaming to use at home and school.
- You make sure that your own knowledge of the school remains rooted in knowing pupils, as well as what is happening across classrooms. You observe the work of staff frequently and carefully and provide helpful feedback to staff about improvement. Your evaluations of the quality of pupils' books and staff assessments of pupils are thorough and accurate, as are those of other leaders. You make sure that leaders use a wide range of information when reviewing where the school needs to improve further. As a result, your overall assessment of the school's successes and your plans for improvement are clear and well considered.
- Given that some staff have moved to other schools or retired, you have taken a careful look at how you want to organise the school moving forward. For example, you have appointed new staff to key roles for leading early years and for coordinating special educational needs in the school. You have improved how leaders review their areas of responsibility as well as how they support you to keep an informed overview of the whole school. Leaders feel supported by you and are developing much confidence and skill in their new roles. They are excited about the opportunities ahead for helping the school to develop further.
- You have rightly set raising achievement in the early years, including for disadvantaged children, as a key priority for the school. The new teachers in the early years are working well as a team along with teaching assistants. You are giving staff regular access to training. Staff and leaders are responding wholeheartedly to your challenge about wanting better outcomes for children in the early years. As a consequence, there has been much improvement in the quality of teaching and learning for the youngest children in the school. Staff are focusing closely and successfully on developing children's language and communication skills, their physical abilities and their emotional confidence. With more and more children developing these important basic skills, staff are increasingly able to help children to read, write, count, investigate and solve problems. Children at the end of Reception in 2016 made good progress from their starting points. Leaders are clear what will aid further improvement and enhance provision across the early years.

- While you are ambitious and pushing for improvement in pupils' achievement across subjects, one key area for development is pupils' writing in key stages 1 and 2, including for the most able pupils. There is widespread and positive celebration of pupils' good writing in displays on classroom walls and in corridors. The curriculum includes good use of books, reading and authors as a springboard for inspiring pupils to write. There is great emphasis in lessons on all pupils taking pride in their writing, and they learn effective editing skills. Through well-planned training and links to other schools, you are supporting staff to have a precise understanding of what to expect of pupils in the presentation and content of their writing. You have strong arrangements to check that staff assessments of pupils are accurate and supported well by pupils' work. Pupils are benefiting from increased opportunities to write longer pieces of work and to write more extensively in different subjects. For the most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, teachers are giving extra attention to provoking pupils to think more deeply about their writing. While leaders are checking closely for improvements in pupils' writing, you have given staff improved ways of tracking how well pupils are progressing. School information indicates that pupils across the school are beginning to make increased progress in their writing this year. Nonetheless, the extensive range of work being undertaken now needs to be focused further upon lifting the progress of the most able pupils.
- The school places great value on developing pupils' enjoyment of books and stories as well the teaching of phonics. The school library is attractive, well-resourced and used frequently. High-quality books and information celebrating different authors are evident throughout the school. Pupils talk about different authors with confidence. Pupils want to read and the most able disadvantaged pupils have a clear understanding of what will help them be even better readers. Across the school, pupils' achievement in reading is improving. For example, in the Year 1 assessment of phonics, the proportion of pupils meeting the expected standard in 2016 was above the national figure. While the achievement of pupils in reading in key stages 1 and 2 in 2016 is broadly average, you have established a clear range of steps to improve pupils' progress in reading this year. For example, teachers are giving pupils even greater planned opportunities to practise and refine their reading skills with adult help.
- In the past, not all pupils attended school as frequently as they should. You have given this matter considerable attention. By linking well with the local authority, you make sure that you are using relevant information to review the attendance of different individuals and groups of pupils across the school. You have set out your high expectations for full attendance very clearly to parents and pupils and you are unafraid to challenge any lack of commitment. You make sure that staff focus closely on the needs of individual pupils and families to increase pupils' attendance. Consequently, attendance has risen quickly and is now in line with the national average. The number of pupils who attend every day is good and improving. The number of pupils who miss school regularly has dropped dramatically. You are not complacent and have many arrangements in place to further improve pupils' attendance. Your approach includes positive acknowledgement to pupils and families when attendance is good. Pupils aspire to receive one of the termly medals for attendance. They enjoy seeing the success of different classes to attend highly being celebrated within the school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the child protection policy gives a complete overview of the range of agreed safeguarding policies and procedures the school already has in place
- teachers and teaching assistants develop greater teaching skills so the most able pupils achieve as highly as possible, including in their writing.

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

Yours sincerely

Tim Vaughan
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection I considered whether the school remains good by considering a number of questions with you. I considered whether the teaching of writing is improving across the school. I checked how well the quality of provision in the early years is improving. I examined how successfully the school has improved attendance. I reviewed how well leaders have sustained and improved the school since the previous inspection. I also explored in detail whether safeguarding is effective. To answer these questions you and I visited classrooms, talked to pupils and looked at examples of pupils' work. I spoke to some leaders and school governors, including the chair of governors. I considered information from external reviews of the school and met with a representative of Knowsley local authority. I spoke to some parents as they dropped children off at school. I heard some children read and looked at the provision of books in classrooms and the school library. I looked at school policies and records about the care and protection of pupils.