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24 May 2017

Mrs Alison Edleston
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Dear Mrs Alison Edleston

Short inspection of Pear Tree Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 23 May 2017, 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in March 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. When you were appointed in 2016, you quickly identified what the school was doing well and where it could be improved. You have maintained the many strengths that the school enjoys, including the close partnership with parents who appreciate and value the school's work. Typically, parents comment that Pear Tree 'is a lovely, friendly, well-managed school' from which their children 'come home happy and look forward to going back the next day.'

Pupils arrive into a welcoming environment each morning and enjoy their learning and the positive relationships that they have with staff. Pupils are well cared for and are keen to do their best. Their behaviour in classrooms and around school is impeccable. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is at the heart of the school's work. In fact, you have developed your own 'Heart and Soul' curriculum to make sure that pupils have many rich opportunities to experience life in the wider world and to understand the lives of others.

A talented group of governors offers strong support to the leadership of the school. Together with them, you are ambitious to achieve the very best for the pupils, and the judgements you make on the school's performance are honest and accurate. You have not been complacent in taking prompt action where improvements are needed. For example, you recognised that some pupils, including those who are

disadvantaged, were not learning their phonics (letters and the sounds they make) as quickly as they should and this was affecting their reading and writing. You recently introduced a much more structured approach to the teaching of phonics, targeted at meeting the needs of individual groups of pupils. This is having a positive impact and benefiting all pupils, including disadvantaged and those who are most able. Although standards are rising, you are aware that more work needs to be done to make sure that the teaching of phonics is consistent.

You are energetically addressing shortcomings and tackling any underperformance in a calm and measured way. You recognise that the school does not gather enough information about the assessment of pupils in subjects other than English and mathematics. You want to make sure that leaders and governors have an accurate picture of the attainment and progress that pupils make in all of the curriculum subjects. You recognise that plans are at a very early stage and need to be further developed.

At the last inspection in 2014, leaders were asked to increase the amount of outstanding teaching, especially in mathematics. Action taken to give pupils more opportunities to apply their good basic skills to solve mathematical investigations has been successful. Well-planned and meaningful opportunities to develop their reasoning and problem-solving skills are helping pupils to reach the higher standards in mathematics. The most able pupils particularly have benefited from the changes, so that by the time they leave Pear Tree Primary School they make much better progress than other pupils nationally in their mathematics.

Safeguarding is effective.

School leaders take their responsibility with regard to safeguarding very seriously. The governors and leadership team have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are effective and that the detailed records are of high quality. Appropriate statutory checks are carried out on the suitability of staff to work with children. School policies are published on the school's website and are compliant with government guidance. Staff are well trained in child protection.

The innovative work you have done with Bangor University to teach pupils to recognise different types of bullying shows the importance you place on pupil safety. Through this initiative, pupils are learning to work cooperatively to try to prevent bullying. They are alert to any signs that this might happen in school. They also have a deep understanding of the harm that discrimination such as homophobic or racist behaviour can cause to society. Incidents of bullying are rare, and pupils say that they are dealt with very fairly. Pupils feel safe in your care.

Inspection findings

- In this inspection, I focused my time on four different areas. Firstly, I investigated why the published data in 2016 seems to show that some groups of pupils in key stage 1 did not make the progress that they should in writing. You have already identified this issue and have made changes to the way that

teachers track the progress of pupils to make sure that any pupil falling behind is quickly given extra help to enable them to catch up. Leaders closely monitor the progress of all classes and individual pupils and provide support to improve the quality of teaching when it is needed. The work in pupils' books confirms your own information that progress in writing is improving. The difference between the achievement of boys and girls in both key stage 1 and key stage 2 is diminishing. All pupils are benefiting from the more rigorous approach to the teaching of grammar, punctuation and spelling.

- I also considered why boys did not seem to be doing as well as girls with their reading. As well as the improvements in the teaching of phonics, specific reading programmes have been implemented across the school. These are having a positive impact on progress for all pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. When listening to pupils read, it is clear that they are learning skills to help them to make rapid progress. They read frequently and are fluent and confident readers. Pupils appreciate and make good use of the wide choice of books that the school offers. Opportunities to encourage pupils to read for pleasure are frequent. For example, reluctant readers enjoy the 'full English' where pupils are invited to have breakfast with the headteacher. Staff use books to excite and enthuse, as shown when the staff team, including the caretaker helped pupils to build a den, light a fire and cook bacon just like a character from 'The Boy who Biked Around the World'. The school's own assessments and monitoring show that these strategies are working, and a high proportion of pupils are on track to achieve or exceed the standards expected of them in reading by the time they leave the school.
- The third focus was to find out why there was such a sharp dip in pupils' attainment and progress in 2015 at the end of key stage 2 and whether this affects current pupils. Work carried out during this inspection, the school's own analysis and reports from external advisers make it clear that this set of results is not typical of the achievement of pupils across the school. The composition of the cohort in Year 6 in 2015 was unusual and included a much higher-than-average number of boys and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. There were also issues affecting individual pupils, such as bereavement and serious illness. This, together with staffing difficulties in previous year groups, meant that pupils were not well prepared for their tests. Effective action was taken swiftly to improve any areas of weakness, with better support for pupils who were not doing as well as they should, including disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and /or disabilities. Further changes were made to the way the school was teaching English and mathematics. This action has been positive, and pupils currently in school are making good progress in these subjects.
- The fourth area of focus was concerned with the low attendance of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Your detailed records show that most groups of pupils have good attendance. Systems that are in place to check on the absence of individual pupils are robust. Some of the pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities have medical needs and have required some significant absences from school. As a result, the attendance figures for this group have been adversely affected. Staff work well with other

agencies, such as attendance specialists, to help reduce absence. The support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities receive is good and enables them to make good progress from their starting points.

- Lastly, I asked questions to find out whether the governing body is fulfilling its statutory duty to publish correct and accurate information on the website. At the start of the inspection, the website information did not comply with the national requirements. Minor amendments were made during the inspection to publish the updated report for special educational needs and/or disabilities, which was in draft form. In addition, the school's information on the use of the additional sports funding was updated. There is a good system in place for governors to check the website, its contents, accessibility and its accuracy. Governors take their responsibilities seriously and effectively shape the direction and culture of the school and challenge leaders to improve it further.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to strengthen the teaching of phonics by providing further training to improve the knowledge and skills of staff
- the leadership of subjects other than English and mathematics is improved, so that all areas are well planned and pupils' progress is monitored and assessed.

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

Yours sincerely

Catherine Parkinson
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I carried out observations of learning in five year groups. Two of these were joint observations with the headteacher. Along with subject leaders, I also looked at pupils' work in books. I scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation summary, action plans for school improvement, records of the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning, minutes of meetings of the governing body, behaviour logs and records connected with the safeguarding of pupils. I held discussions with parents, members of staff, governors and the school improvement partner. I listened to pupils read. I evaluated 46 responses received through 'Parent View', Ofsted's online survey, and by email and one response received through the online staff survey. I also took account of the views of pupils I spoke to in school and the 28 responses received through the pupil online survey.