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Mrs Susan Aldred
Headteacher
Audley Junior School
Queen's Park Road
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Dear Mrs Aldred

Short inspection of Audley Junior School

Following my visit to the school on 8 June 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 the school was judged to be good in July 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Under your leadership, the school has continued to go from strength to strength. You and your deputy headteacher have created a strong and skilful leadership team.

You focus effectively on making the necessary changes to improve the quality of education that the school provides. It is clear that you and your staff work with a sense of urgency to ensure that the pupils at your school receive a good education. I was particularly impressed with how you have worked on your recent school improvement priorities. You have approached the changes seriously and with a high level of commitment and determination. You have been notably successful in improving the quality of reading.

All the parents who spoke to me or responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, are also very positive about the school and your leadership. They say that the school is 'very welcoming' and they feel that their children flourish under the care of your staff.

When I spoke to your staff it was clear that they are approachable, enthusiastic and determined to deliver the very best for the school's pupils. All the staff who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire were overwhelming in their praise of the school. They are particularly complimentary about the support and career development opportunities that you offer them and the strong focus that you place on their well-being. They think that

you and your deputy are 'excellent' role models.

Your pupils are very polite and well mannered. They concentrate well in lessons and respond positively to your staff. They feel that your staff care for each of them and that the learning is always 'fun'. They also say that the trips that you and your staff organise for them are 'amazing' because they help them with their learning and personal development.

The previous inspection identified the need to improve the quality of teaching, with a focus on encouraging pupils to take a greater pride in their work. The quality of presentation in pupils' books is now consistently good throughout the school. You are rightly proud of the quality of handwriting that is now being produced by your pupils. That said, you acknowledge that there needs to be a continuing focus on challenging the most able pupils.

The previous inspection report also identified the need to improve the quality of governance of the school. The work that you have done, and the level of openness that you and your staff have created, now enables the governors to bring more support and challenge to the school. Governors have invested time in their own training and development. They have also introduced new ways of monitoring the progress being made towards achieving the school's priorities. Your leadership team and staff have noticed the difference that governors make in driving forward school improvement. One staff member told me that governors now 'make us think more deeply' about how we can improve outcomes for our pupils. They are committed to ensuring that school leaders deliver the very best standards of education. Governors are unrelenting in their pursuit for excellence.

You have rightly identified that not enough pupils reached the expected standard in reading. At the end of key stage 2, in 2016, the proportion attaining the expected standard was below the national average.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Records are detailed and up to date. Pupils told me that they feel safe. Parents feel that the school is a 'wonderful, safe and caring environment'. Pupils are aware of the different forms of bullying and the distress that it may cause. They are extremely positive about the work that leaders undertake to prevent bullying.

You, your deputy and your well-being officer work hard to ensure that pupils and staff are safe at all times. Training is up to date and staff are clear about the procedures that they should follow if they have any safeguarding concerns about their pupils.

Online safety is promoted effectively. Pupils regularly write their own e-safety newsletter. There is a robust ICT filtering system in place that adds another layer of security which helps pupils keep safe online.

Inspection findings

- A key focus for my visit was to consider how leaders were improving outcomes in reading. In 2016, the number of pupils reaching the expected standard in writing and mathematics was either in line or above the national average. However, the progress and attainment of pupils in reading, including for the most able, were below national averages.
- Leaders took swift action to improve the teaching of reading. Staff have been given extra training and support; this has had a positive effect on the standards that pupils achieve in reading. You and your staff are very clear about what will make the biggest difference to pupils' reading skills. There is now a bigger focus on ensuring that pupils understand what they have read. Teachers also ensure that pupils know, understand and are able to use a wider range of vocabulary in their reading and their writing. There was clear evidence of these skills being developed during our visits to lessons. However, we agreed that improving progress and achievement in reading at the end of key stage 2 must continue to be a key priority.
- You have established a new team of teachers who have a particular responsibility for reading. They are very knowledgeable about teaching reading and have a good understanding of the attainment of pupils in each class. This knowledge is being used effectively to strengthen the teaching of reading.
- During the inspection, I heard a number of pupils read who are in receipt of the pupil premium funding. They read fluently and could discuss what they had read with precision. However, leaders should ensure that pupils have access to a wider range of reading materials, including more-challenging texts. This is to improve pupils' outcomes in reading further still.
- Another focus for the inspection was the progress of pupils in receipt of pupil premium who do not achieve the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics. When looking in your disadvantaged pupils' class books and when observing teaching, there was clear evidence that teachers now provide disadvantaged pupils with appropriate challenge. Without doubt, you have used the pupil premium funding wisely to improve the learning experiences for disadvantaged pupils in reading, writing and mathematics. Appropriate and timely support is given to pupils when a dip in progress is identified.
- The guidance and support that your pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities receive was another line of enquiry for my visit. Provision for these pupils is monitored carefully. The special educational needs co-ordinator works closely with all pupils and their families. She is very clear about the progress that this group of pupils make. A range of interventions, particularly in relation to reading, are successful in improving pupils' skills across their subjects. Current information and work in books shows that pupils now make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Leaders and governors have put in place a good range of activities to ensure that pupils' overall achievement and progress continue to improve. The tracking of pupils' performance is robust. The conversations that your staff have about individual pupil's progress with you and your deputy headteacher are rigorous and effective. As a result, outcomes look set to improve further.
- The work of the governing body is effective in helping pupils to improve, particularly in writing and mathematics. Leaders are clear that since the previous inspection they

are much more accountable to the governing body. Leaders are also clear that governors 'have a better understanding of the school' and that they ask more-challenging questions of the role of subject leader. During the inspection, my meeting with governors confirmed this view. Governors have an appropriate range of skills that enable them to provide appropriate support and challenge.

- On my visit we scrutinised the rates of attendance of your pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The work of the school's home-school liaison officer contributes well to ensuring that your pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities attend school. You were able to show the impact of this work on individual families. The school's systems and procedures in relation to attendance are thorough and each individual pupil is monitored carefully. Current attendance figures for the pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are high.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- progress and attainment in reading continue to improve
- the most-able disadvantaged pupils are challenged in their learning so more achieve the highest standards.

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

Yours sincerely

Howard Bousfield
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you and your senior leadership team. I also met with five members of the governing body and I spoke with the school improvement partner. You accompanied me on a learning walk, on which we visited classes and had the opportunity to speak with pupils and look at their work. I listened to a number of pupils read and I also met formally with a group of pupils. I spoke with several parents at the school gate and took account of parents' comments. I took into account nine responses to Parent View. Added to this, I scrutinised your assessment information, the school improvement plan, the single central record, attendance information and other safeguarding policies. I also undertook a review of the school's website.