

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mrs Julie Cole
Pool House Community Primary School
Kidsgrove
Tanterton
Ingol
Preston
Lancashire
PR2 7BX

Dear Mrs Cole

Short inspection of Pool House Community Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 5 July 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 May 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

You are committed to the success of this school, to the staff, pupils, parents and the community. You provide strong and effective leadership and have a clear vision for continued improvement. You continually strive to identify and remove barriers to pupils' learning. There is a clear drive and a determination to provide high-quality learning experiences that enable all pupils to thrive. You have nurtured a calm and purposeful environment characterised by strong, caring relationships between pupils and staff. Pupils typically commented that 'staff talk with us about our feelings'. Teachers' high-quality guidance helps pupils to develop into confident learners. Adults encourage pupils to be thoughtful and kind citizens who make a valuable contribution to their community within and beyond school. Your pupils are delightful; their manners and courtesy to visitors, staff and to each other are noteworthy.

You and your assistant headteacher have steered the school and successfully made improvements to the areas identified at the last inspection. You have an accurate view of the school. Through regular checking of the quality of teaching and learning you know what the school needs to do next, and school improvement is focused on the right areas. However, leaders' plans to improve the school even further are not as clear as they could be.

As you seek opportunities to further develop the quality of education you provide, you welcome and encourage external challenge and support. This includes support provided by your school improvement professional, which has been highly effective in promoting further improvement.

Your governors play a key role in supporting the work of the school. They are ambitious for the school to succeed. Governors speak passionately about the ethos of the school. They attend a range of appropriate training and are knowledgeable and well equipped in a range of areas to support the school's work effectively.

The school's website is not compliant with statutory requirements: some policies and information are missing or are incomplete. You and your governors recognise the need for regular checks to ensure that the website information meets requirements.

You give close attention to assessment information to identify where support is needed. For example, in 2016, the proportion of pupils attaining the expected standard in the grammar, punctuation and spelling test was lower than the national average. You reviewed the teaching of grammar, spelling and punctuation, raising staff knowledge and expertise and ensuring that regular assessments inform teaching. This has had a positive impact on outcomes across all year groups in school. Current school data shows an increased proportion of pupils are on track to reach the expected and higher standard in grammar, spelling and punctuation.

Improving the proportion of outstanding teaching to raise pupils' achievement in reading and writing was identified as an area for improvement at the previous inspection. You and your assistant headteacher took part in the 'World Class Leadership Programme' which enabled you to visit a range of schools and explore wider teaching practice. As a result, you have shared your observations with staff and, together, raised further your expectations of teaching and learning. You and your assistant headteacher regularly observe the quality of teaching and learning. The observations carried out with you during the inspection demonstrate that you have an accurate view of the quality of the teaching and learning. This has resulted in accelerated progress in reading and writing and a rise in pupils' achievement in these subjects.

Parents are very pleased with the school. They say their children are happy and enjoy coming to school, that the school is approachable, there is good communication and any issues or concerns are dealt with promptly. The following comment echoed that of many other parents: 'The school and staff are worth their weight in gold. I am very proud to be part of Pool House School.'

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team, governors and staff take safeguarding seriously and regard it as being everyone's responsibility. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records kept are of good quality.

Thorough checks are undertaken to confirm the suitability of all staff, volunteers and governors. All adults in school have received appropriate, up-to-date training. The school's records show that staff report concerns promptly. Leaders act quickly to safeguard the welfare of vulnerable pupils, drawing on support from external agencies. Close partnerships with parents contribute effectively to leaders' work to safeguard pupils.

Leaders ensure that any potential risks to pupils' safety are assessed thoroughly, both on the school site and during trips. Arrangements for meeting pupils' first aid and medical needs are well planned, so pupils receive support when it is needed. Pupils told me that they feel safe, and parents share this view. They know that adults will help them sort out any issues which may occur. The curriculum develops pupils' awareness of how they can keep themselves safe, for example when crossing the road or using the internet. Pupils know about different types of bullying. They say that bullying happens occasionally and if it does then adults deal with it swiftly.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry focused on writing, particularly on how well the most able pupils were being challenged to reach the higher standard. In 2016, assessments showed that no pupil reached the high standard at the end of key stage 2. You have acted decisively to address the weaknesses identified. Leaders have raised teachers' expectations of the quality of pupils' writing. Learning tasks are planned to meet the range of pupils' needs, including those of the most able pupils. Staff meet regularly to discuss and assess pupils' work. Partnerships with local schools are helping teachers to measure the standard of pupils' work with greater accuracy than in the past. As a result, teachers are clear about what they need to teach so that more pupils write to a high standard in a range of genres. Pupils are keen to do their best and are proud of their work. Pupils typically commented to the inspector: 'We work really hard to improve our writing.' School data shows strong progress across all year groups. There has been an increase in the proportions of pupils reaching both the expected standard and the higher standard in writing at key stage 2.
- The second line of enquiry focused on pupils' attendance, particularly the attendance of pupils who are disadvantaged. In 2016, absence rates for these groups were significantly above the national averages. Leaders identify quickly any pupils who are not attending school as often as they should. You work in close partnership with families and external agencies to tailor additional support to pupils' particular circumstances. As a result of well-focused efforts by the safeguarding and pastoral team, attendance rates for disadvantaged pupils have improved. However, you recognise the need to send a stronger message to all parents about the high expectations the school has for attendance to ensure that the upward trend continues.
- The final line of enquiry focused on how effectively phonics is taught. In 2016, the proportions of pupils who met the expected standard in the phonics screening check, both at the end of Year 1 and at the end of Year 2, were below the national averages. You have taken effective action to raise the achievement

of Year 1 pupils in phonics. Observations of phonics teaching show that work is well matched to the needs of the pupils. Teaching staff have strong subject knowledge and systems are in place to regularly assess pupils and ensure that they move swiftly through the stages of phonic development. School data shows that a higher proportion of Year 1 pupils have met the expected standard in phonics this year. The proportion of Year 2 pupils who met the standard has also increased. You are aware that standards need to rise still further and have appointed a phonics leader to head this work. The phonics leader has not yet had the opportunity to monitor the quality of phonics teaching and to support further staff development. You recognise this as a key school priority and have plans in place to develop the role of subject leadership in the coming year.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the school improvement plan is more sharply focused to include steps to measure the success of actions, linked to expected gains in pupils' progress
- subject leadership is developed and the outcomes from the monitoring of teaching and learning in all subject areas have a positive impact on pupils' progress
- the school website is compliant with statutory requirements and regularly reviewed
- attendance for all groups of pupils continues to improve.

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

Yours sincerely

Aleksandra Hartshorne
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you, your assistant headteacher and leaders of the early years, phonics and English. I also met with your inclusion leader and four representatives of the governing body, and I had a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. I observed the quality of teaching and learning in a number of classes; some of these observations I conducted with you. I reviewed a range of documentation throughout the day, including the school's assessment information, the school improvement plan, leaders' self-evaluation, local authority reports, child protection procedures and policies, governing body minutes and a selection of pupils' work. As well as talking to pupils in lessons, I met with pupils from different year groups to talk about their learning. I jointly looked at a range of pupils' books with one of your teachers. I viewed the 20 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. There were no responses from pupils or staff. At the beginning of the day, I had conversations with parents and carers.