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Mrs Jeanette Westhead
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Jeanette Westhead

Short inspection of Lowton West Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 14 September 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 April 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You and other leaders, including governors, are rightly proud of the school's many strengths. However, more importantly, you have a sharp focus on the areas that require further improvement. You use pupils' performance information effectively to inform the actions that you take to bring about further improvement in outcomes. Leaders and teachers know their pupils well and are able to respond to their individual needs appropriately.

This is a very welcoming, friendly school and parents value the caring ethos that you have created. The parents and grandparents that I spoke to at the start of the day were very positive about the school and said that they would recommend it to others. This view was echoed by the vast majority of those who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, many of whom took the time to write comments. Several parents spoke of how much their children love coming to school and how happy they are there. As one parent stated: 'My son comes home with a smile on his face and tells me how much he enjoys school.'

All pupils who spoke to me during the inspection were extremely positive about their school. They speak highly of their teachers, particularly how helpful they are. Pupils have genuine enthusiasm for their learning, which they find interesting and enjoyable. Mathematics is particularly popular and pupils relish the way that teachers challenge them in this subject. Challenge in mathematics, particularly for

the most able, was an area requiring improvement at the last inspection and this has been a high priority for all staff.

You have successfully tackled the other areas that you were asked to improve at the last inspection. You were asked to ensure that your development planning was more sharply focused. You and other leaders responded to the disappointing progress scores for reading in 2016, particularly for disadvantaged pupils, by immediately putting in place a meticulous plan to address this. The impact of the actions that you have taken can be seen in the improved unvalidated progress and attainment scores for reading in 2017. This demonstrates the effectiveness of your development planning. However, you and governors know that the profile of reading needs to be raised across the school in order to improve standards in this area further.

Over the last three years, the number of pupils reaching the expected standard in the phonics screening check has been well above the national average. This shows the impact of the actions you have taken to ensure that all adults across the school teach phonics effectively. This was also an area for improvement at the last inspection.

Safeguarding is effective.

You ensure that a strong culture of safeguarding is at the heart of the school. All safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose, including protocols and practices for record-keeping. Systems to ensure that only suitable people are recruited to work with children in the school are secure.

You and your staff know your pupils and their families extremely well. This, coupled with the training that staff receive, means that you are all well placed to spot any signs or symptoms of potential risk or abuse.

Online safety is a high priority in school. Staff have received training in this area and you send out regular information to parents on this issue. You also devote themed days to this topic.

Inspection findings

- Your overall attendance figure has been above the national average in recent years. However, this has not been the case for disadvantaged pupils. Consequently, a line of enquiry for this inspection was to find out what actions you have taken to improve the attendance of this group of pupils. Last year you employed an attendance officer. Although she works closely with the families of all pupils who have low attendance, she focuses particularly on those who are disadvantaged. The impact of her work can be seen in the improved attendance figure for this group at the end of the last academic year, which is now broadly in line with the national average.
- In 2016, the progress scores in reading for pupils of all abilities were well below the national figure. Disadvantaged pupils, particularly the most able, did not

make good progress. A key line of enquiry for this inspection was therefore to find out whether pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged, are now making better progress in reading. Throughout last year, you ensured that pupils' progress in reading was a high priority for all staff. You have worked with the partnership director for your local authority school cluster and with external consultants to ensure that staff have received appropriate training related to reading. Alongside this, you monitor very closely the progress that individual pupils are making and provide personalised support when required. The unvalidated overall progress and attainment scores for 2017 represent an improvement on 2016 and show that the actions that you have taken have had some impact. Disadvantaged pupils also made better progress and more of them achieved the expected standard.

- Evidence gathered during the inspection indicates that although you made reading a priority last year, it does not yet have a consistently high enough profile across the school. For example, the reading environment in many classrooms is not conducive to encouraging a love of reading. We discussed the importance of all staff focusing on developing pupils' comprehension skills and vocabulary. We also agreed that opportunities had been missed at the start of this term to get pupils into the habit of reading regularly at home.
- You were asked at the previous inspection to accelerate pupils' progress in mathematics in key stage 2, particularly for the most able pupils. This was in order to raise their attainment further by the end of Year 6. My inspection findings show that you have prepared your teachers to deliver the new mathematics curriculum effectively. There is a strong focus on developing pupils' reasoning skills. It is clear from talking to pupils and looking at the quality of work in their books that teachers routinely challenge them to reach high standards, particularly in key stage 2. The unvalidated 2017 progress score represents an improvement on the previous year. Attainment scores show that the proportion of Year 6 pupils that achieved the higher standard is above the provisional national average.
- In key stage 1, disadvantaged pupils achieve at least as well as their peers nationally, but this is not the case in key stage 2. Along with governors, you have made this a key area for improvement over the last year. The impact of your actions is evident in the 2017 unvalidated figures, which show improved progress and attainment for disadvantaged pupils at the end of key stage 2 in reading and mathematics. However, we discussed how you intend to build on these improvements to ensure that these pupils achieve at least as well as others nationally by the end of Year 6.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- there is a consistently strong focus on reading across the school
- they build on the improvements already made, to further diminish the difference between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and others nationally by the end of key stage 2.

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

Yours sincerely

Anne Seneviratne
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and the deputy headteacher, four members of the governing body, including the chair, and the partnership director of the local authority school cluster. I met formally with two groups of pupils and talked informally with others in lessons. I listened to pupils read. I also talked with parents informally at the start of the school day. Accompanied by you, I observed teaching and learning across the school. I examined your self-evaluation document. I also undertook a review of the school's website. As part of the inspection, I considered the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaires for parents, pupils and staff.