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Mr I Matthews
Headteacher
Ashleigh Primary School
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Dear Mr Matthews

Short inspection of Ashleigh Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 4 October 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 October 2012.

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 your deputy headteacher work effectively as a team. Together you have galvanised teaching and driven improvements across the school. Pupils receive a broad range of experiences, which help them to enjoy their time at school. They are well prepared for the next stage in their education due to your effective transition procedures.

There is a welcoming and happy atmosphere at your school. The school motto, 'together we learn, grow and achieve', underpins all that you do. Pupils and staff are keen to learn and improve everything they do, to be the best. Leaders have created a strong and supportive team spirit. Staff who responded to the online survey state that they enjoy working at the school and are proud to be a part of it.

Pupils enjoy coming to school. They are polite, well mannered and keen to express their views. Pupils' attitudes to learning are positive. In lessons and around school, pupils behave sensibly and show respect to everyone around them. Relationships between pupils and staff are very positive. Pupils are keen to celebrate that they are allowed to be themselves at your school. They agree that the best thing about the school is that 'everyone is unique'.

The majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, are positive about the school. As one parent commented, 'The staff are committed to the well-being and development of all children and go above and

beyond their objectives. I am very happy to send my children here and feel they are developing into lovely, well-rounded individuals.' There are some concerns from parents regarding communication. We talked about the many different ways that you communicate with parents to keep them up to date with events. However, you agree that more regular communication about pupils' progress would help parents to support their children more effectively.

The previous inspection reported that pupils' attainment in writing and mathematics needed to improve. Leaders have developed teaching, learning and assessment in writing across the school. You have rightly focused on improving spelling and punctuation. Staff receive regular training and guidance on how to improve their teaching. Pupils have a daily discrete grammar lessons across the school. Evidence from lessons, published data and pupils' books demonstrates that pupils are making good progress. Writing achievement across the school has become a strength. Pupils' progress in writing is above the national expectation at the end of key stage 2.

In mathematics, most pupils in key stage 2 are also making good progress. They achieve in line with national expectations at the expected and higher standard. However, the most able pupils in key stage 1 achieve slightly below the national expectation at the higher standard. The lessons we observed and work in pupils' books identify that opportunities to develop problem-solving and reasoning skills are not maximised. We agreed that the most able pupils could be further challenged in mathematics across the school.

The previous inspection also identified the need to develop the role of subject leaders. This was to ensure that subject action plans identify the areas that most need attention to raise outcomes for pupils. The English and mathematics leaders provide you with valuable support. Together, you check the quality of teaching and track pupils' progress in your drive to improve outcomes. The English and mathematics leaders have played a key role in the improvements made in pupils' achievement across the school. The leadership of other subjects has been restructured. All staff are actively involved in one of the curriculum teams, where they share expertise. This has resulted in a drive to improve teaching and learning in all subjects. However, you agreed that leadership of the other subjects is still at an early stage. You talked about the need to provide more opportunities for middle leaders to develop their roles. We agreed that they need to use pupils' progress to identify the necessary improvements required.

Despite slower progress in addressing some of the issues from the previous inspection, many other key improvements have been made to ensure that the school continues to be good.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding arrangements across the school, including in the early years, are robust and fit for purpose. There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. All staff and governors understand their roles in keeping children safe. Regular staff

training ensures that they are knowledgeable about how to spot signs and symptoms of abuse. Safeguarding records and policies are up to date and reflect the most recent changes to government legislation. Records used to check the suitability of staff to work with children meet all requirements.

Pupils told me that they feel safe at school. Older pupils talked to me about different kinds of bullying and how to stay safe online. Pupils were keen to tell me that bullying does not take place. They spoke with clarity about how they look after each other throughout the school day. Pupils know what to do if they are upset or have concerns. They were all in agreement that if they have any concerns, adults help them. As a result, pupils enjoy school and their attendance is consistently good. Parents who completed the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, confirm that their children are safe and happy. As one parent commented, 'It is a caring and friendly school which focuses upon the progress, well-being and importantly the happiness of all.'

Inspection findings

- This inspection focused on a number of key lines of enquiry. The first of these looked at how leaders were improving the teaching of mathematics for the most able pupils in key stage 1. This is because in previous years, the proportion of pupils who achieve at the higher standard was below the national expectation. Teachers have had training to improve their knowledge and understanding of the new mathematics curriculum. As a result, they are confident when teaching mathematics and pupils are making good progress from their starting points. However, lessons we observed and work in pupils' books demonstrate that the most able pupils are not being challenged sufficiently within mathematics. You agreed that this would continue to be an area for improvement within the school.
- The second key line of enquiry is linked to one of your key priorities. You identify that the progress boys make in the early years needs to improve. For many years, the proportion of boys in the early years reaching a good level of development has been below the national average. There has been a period of instability in teaching within the early years and you have taken action to address this. Leaders have ensured that assessment systems are detailed and robust, so that teachers accurately plan children's next steps in learning. The early years leader evaluates the quality of teaching, learning and assessment to ensure that children receive high-quality provision. For example, topics have been reviewed so that they are more engaging for boys, for example one about pirates. Through this topic, teachers planned learning that stimulated children's learning, especially boys. As a result, all children are now making more rapid progress.
- Our observation of lessons in the early years shows that teachers and teaching assistants use questioning effectively to support children's learning. Children develop their skills across a well-planned and stimulating learning environment. They are keen to take risks and challenge themselves because of the supportive relationships that staff have established. Boys are keen to write and record numbers across different areas of provision. They speak with excitement about what they are learning and what they have to do. Actions taken by leaders this

year have ensured that all children, especially boys, make good progress.

- Another key line of enquiry considered the progress made by pupils in reading in key stage 2. This is because in previous years, pupils' progress was below the national expectation. Through the monitoring of teaching, leaders have identified the barriers pupils face in their reading. Targeted training for staff has improved subject knowledge. Leaders have actively promoted a love of reading. Pupils have many opportunities to take part in reading theme days and book events and are awarded weekly reading prizes. Pupils read with fluency and expression. They talk with confidence about the type of books they like. Pupils display a genuine love of reading across the school. As a result of leaders' actions, pupils' progress in reading across key stage 2 has risen. There is a similar picture of success in the rising achievement in reading within key stage 1.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the most able pupils are provided with further opportunities to explore and use their skills in mathematics so that more reach the higher standard
- middle leaders gain necessary support and development so they have a greater impact on raising pupils' progress in subjects other than English and mathematics
- communication with parents about their child's progress is sharpened.

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

Julie Kynaston

Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, the deputy headteacher and a group of middle leaders. I spoke with members of the governing body and an officer from the local authority. I spoke with a group of pupils and other pupils around school. Documents were scrutinised, including the school's self-evaluation document, the school's improvement plan, external audits, attendance information and safeguarding checks. I reviewed pupils' achievement records and your checks on the quality of teaching. I also visited lessons with you to speak with pupils, look at examples of their work and observed their behaviour during lessons and as they moved around school. I examined child protection information and minutes from meetings of the governing body. I took account of 54 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 52 free-text responses. I also took account of 18 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire. I completed a review of the school's

website.