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Mrs Shirley Callaghan
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Callaghan

Short inspection of Well Lane Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 2 November 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. In every possible way, you, the governors and your staff have significantly improved this school and the experiences of the pupils. Since the last inspection, there has been a considerable changeover of staff, which you and your governors have managed well. You have built a strong team of dedicated teachers who are committed to improving the life chances of your pupils.

You and your team have created a caring, welcoming and vibrant school. Displays in corridors and classrooms are colourful and celebrate the wide range of pupils' learning experiences. Staff encourage parents and carers to contribute to the displays and celebrate their child's achievements using the 'Wow Wall' on entry to foundation classes. Pupils really enjoy coming to school and are enthusiastic about their learning. They are smart, polite and well mannered. They are proud of their school and say that they are happy and cared for.

The overwhelming majority of parents and carers are very supportive of the school and cannot praise it highly enough for the care and high-quality teaching you provide. Parents say how the school has grown 'from strength to strength' under your leadership and that they are grateful for the opportunities and enriching activities you and your staff provide. Staff are proud to work at the school and feel valued and supported by leaders. They say that the school is a safe environment for pupils and one in which all pupils are challenged to achieve their best. The high expectations of governors, leaders and staff are evident

throughout the school.

Governors and leaders have taken effective action to address the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. In securing improvements to the early years foundation stage, you have renovated and improved the environment to create a welcoming area in which pupils thrive. You have also improved the outside areas, which ensures that learning is seamless. Children can now move between a wide range of fascinating and challenging activities, both indoor and outdoor. You use the successful reading strategies you have introduced for older pupils in the early years and children are quickly developing their reading and writing skills as a result. Governors are highly involved and very knowledgeable about the early years and speak with confidence about how the school prepares children extremely well for key stage 1.

In response to the need to improve the attainment of pupils in mathematics, you have appointed a new member of staff to lead this subject area. You have developed new and effective systems which have seen progress at key stage 2 rise consistently well above the national average. Attainment in mathematics at key stage 1 is improving year on year. Teachers make sure that pupils improve their mathematics skills. No time is wasted in this respect; for example, younger pupils were observed singing mathematics songs and counting in twos and tens while waiting for their mid-morning snack to be given out. Pupils now speak positively about how much they enjoy their mathematics lessons.

Governors are passionate champions of the school. They provide a good balance of both support and challenge for you and leaders. Their view of the school's effectiveness, like yours, is accurate and incisive. Governors are not only involved strategically but also in the daily life of the school. They rarely miss a meeting or an opportunity to be in the school with the pupils. They hold you firmly to account and rightly champion further development of the classrooms in the school as it has had such a positive effect on the learning environment and the outcomes of your youngest pupils.

You acknowledge that strategies for analysing and tracking pupils' progress across the wider curriculum are in need of further development. You, leaders and governors will then know how well individual pupils and groups of pupils are progressing in all subjects as clearly as you do in the core subjects and science. Your continued focus on the development of subject leaders throughout the school will ensure that governors will be able to hold middle leaders rigorously to account for the progress of pupils across all year groups and across the wider curriculum. You recognise that some pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, do not attend school regularly enough. We discussed the need to continue the drive by governors, leaders and staff to improve attendance.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding is a real strength of the school. There is a culture of vigilance, care and support which runs throughout the school. Leaders train staff well in recent safeguarding issues and staff know what to do if they have concerns about a pupil. Leaders work tirelessly to ensure that pupils are safe. You and your staff know every child and every family. You are determined to make sure that pupils and their families access the help and

support they need in a timely manner.

All safeguarding arrangements are rigorous. Procedures for recruiting staff meet statutory requirements. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, both personally and online. They are taught how to stay safe by means of lessons, circle time and through a wide range of visits from agencies such as the police and fire brigade. Pupils say that bullying is extremely rare and that staff deal with it effectively if it does happen. Pupils are confident that there are plenty of staff in the school whom they could talk to if they had concerns or worries and speak highly of the nurture and support they receive from staff in the Rainbow Room.

Inspection findings

- Leaders and the early years team have been successful in improving outcomes so that, year on year, more children achieve a good level of development. The proportion of children achieving a good level of development represents good progress for most children from their often very low starting points, particularly in language and communication.
- Achievement in the Year 1 phonics screening check is above the national average in 2017. This represents an improving picture for pupils and results from the high expectations of staff and the effective interventions staff put into place as soon as any gaps in learning are identified.
- In Year 2, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics has improved this year. This upward trend indicates that pupils make good or better progress from their starting points. Staff plan carefully using a variety of approaches and resources to meet the individual needs of pupils and ensure deep learning. As a result of activities being well suited to their needs and interests, pupils respond very positively and enjoy their daily challenges. These challenges further enrich the high-quality learning evident in key stage 1 classes.
- By the end of key stage 2, pupils typically achieve well above expectations from their starting points in reading, writing and mathematics. The results for 2017 show that attainment and progress in all core subjects have reached new heights. Pupils leave this school very well prepared for high school.
- Pupils make good progress across the wider curriculum in foundation subjects. Leaders ensure that recent baseline measures in foundation subjects provide them with valuable information to begin to measure clearly the progress that pupils make in a wide range of subjects.
- Middle leaders demonstrate strong leadership skills and benefit from targeted professional development which ensures that they grow in confidence both as teachers and as subject leaders. Opportunities to moderate and ensure the accurate and consistent assessment of pupils' progress have been identified by leaders as their next steps. They see this as pivotal in achieving rapid and sustained progress of pupils across the wider curriculum.
- In response to a dip in science results in 2016, leaders were immediately proactive and effective in their strategies to address this issue. Pupils visited the Science Museum in Halifax, won a local eco award and achieved a national science excellence certificate.

Due to a whole-school focus on improving science and strong leadership of this area, results have improved significantly. Pupils are motivated and enjoy their learning, with some pupils now wanting to become physicists or astronomers.

- Attendance of pupils is below the national average. Leaders work closely with families and external agencies to improve the attendance of all pupils, but particularly that of disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities. As a result, current attendance information shows a marked improvement in attendance for all pupils. The work of the governing body is commendable in this area. It provides leaders with additional support and governors meet families to reinforce the importance of good attendance.
- There has been a reduction in the number of pupils who are regularly absent from school. Leaders' work in this area has made a positive difference to the attendance of some groups of pupils but the attendance of disadvantaged pupils needs to improve further. Leaders' analysis of absence is a high priority to help them to track and monitor the effectiveness of the many strategies that they use.
- Pupils speak highly of the attendance rewards they achieve and are proud when their class look after Wally the attendance dog. They are clear that they enjoy being in school and do their best not to have time off. Leaders and governors work tirelessly with parents so that they realise the importance of their child not missing valuable learning time. Strategies to improve punctuality have also been effective.
- Across the school, governors, leaders and staff work cohesively as a strong team to provide a very good quality of education for pupils. Leadership is strong and promotes a happy, caring and safe learning environment where pupils are the priority of all.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- continue to develop subject leadership and assessment systems so that teachers, senior leaders and governors know how well pupils are progressing across the wider curriculum in all subjects and all year groups
- build on recent improvements in the attendance of all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, and
- develop ways to monitor the success of the strategies used to improve attendance and reduce the proportion of pupils who are regularly absent from school.

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

Yours sincerely

Helen O'Neill
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and your senior leaders. In addition, I met with members of the governing body and spoke to a representative of the local authority. I met formally with a group of pupils from across the school and talked informally with others around the school and in lessons.

You accompanied me on visits to classes where we observed teaching and learning, spoke with pupils and looked at the work in some pupils' books. I examined a range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding, attendance and the school's assessment information related to pupils' progress and attainment. I also scrutinised a range of policies and the school's improvement plan and self-evaluation report. In addition, I undertook a review of the school's website.

As part of the inspection, I considered the views expressed by parents in the 14 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, as well as comments received via the free-text facility on Parent View. I also spoke with parents informally in the playground and considered the responses from parents to the school's own surveys. I took into account the 25 responses to a questionnaire for staff.