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Mrs Vicki Guest
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Dear Mrs Guest

Short inspection of Lostock Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 7 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 September 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 senior leadership team's strong and tenacious leadership provides a clear direction for the school, which you have shared effectively with staff and governors. Your honest evaluation of the school ensures that you identify the strengths of the school and appropriate priorities for further improvement. This evaluation is based on comprehensive and thorough monitoring. You have correctly focused your attention on enhancing pupils' skills in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils are increasing their mastery of the subjects. You continue to strive to enhance the progress that pupils make in key stage 2 from their typically high starting points and have appropriately identified science as a school development priority.

Pupils enjoy coming to the school because staff provide an interesting and enticing place in which to learn. Those pupils who spoke with me during the inspection said that they felt safe and that teachers and other adults are helpful. They found difficulty in recollecting any recent incidents of bullying and were confident that adults would deal effectively with any that did occur.

Parents overwhelmingly support the school. Those who spoke with me at the start of the day or who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online parent questionnaire, said that the school strongly promotes learning. They were keen to share how inclusive the school was and how staff went the extra mile to help pupils and parents who are new to the country to make a positive start at Lostock. These were typified by repeated reference to the school as

a 'learning family' and comments such as, 'The children are happy, safe and thrive in a loving, caring environment.'

Leaders have taken appropriate actions to address the areas for development identified at the last inspection. These included enhancing the quality of teaching and improving pupils' progress in mathematics.

The work seen in pupils' books and your detailed tracking of school-based assessments confirm that your actions have successfully brought about considerable improvement in the progress that pupils now make in mathematics. Provisional outcomes in national assessments in key stage 1 confirm the positive impact of your actions. In key stage 2, pupil's progress shows sustained improvement. The work in current pupils' books shows that progress is accelerating quickly.

Since the last inspection, the quality of teaching has improved considerably. The well-considered appointments of new staff have strengthened the quality of teaching and that of leadership. Appropriate amendments to policies and procedures mean that pupils now receive high-quality teaching that systematically develops their knowledge and skills, particularly in reading, writing and mathematics. Teachers and teaching assistants are better trained and are more knowledgeable about the strategies they can use to develop mastery of subjects. New developments to the curriculum make effective use of the outdoors to seize pupils' interests and promote pupils' confidence to apply their knowledge and skills. Leaders frequently check and hold teachers closely to account for the impact of actions on pupils' learning. Pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged, make better progress than other pupils nationally because of the high-quality teaching that they receive.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are of high quality and fit for purpose. Knowledgeable staff meticulously implement the school's policies relating to safeguarding. Statutory checks are carried out on the suitability of staff to work with children. Leaders have taken effective actions to ensure that the school is a safe and secure place in which children can learn.

Appropriate and frequent training ensures that staff have up-to-date knowledge of safeguarding. Staff are vigilant about the potential risks that pupils may face. Records, including high-quality risk assessments, and those relating to pupils' welfare, are appropriate and meticulously kept. Leaders share information with parents and the appropriate authorities effectively to ensure pupils' safety. Governors have ensured that the appropriate monitoring and filtering arrangements are in place for the school's internet connection.

Inspection findings

- Leaders and governors have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school because of their frequent and detailed monitoring and self-evaluation. Sharply focused evaluation of termly assessments ensures that you have a detailed understanding of pupils' attainment and progress from their starting points. Leaders

regularly visit classrooms, scrutinise pupils' work and seek the views of pupils to evaluate the impact of teaching on pupils' learning. You use these findings to hold teachers closely to account and help staff to improve their practice through regular focused discussions about pupils' progress.

- Subject leaders plan and implement appropriate developments in their subjects. These actions have brought about improvements to the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes. They include refinements to the way that mathematics is taught to promote pupils' mastery of the subject. They also include the strong development of the creative aspects of the curriculum, particularly the use of the school's woodland and outdoor environment to enhance pupils' independence and resilience in learning. Your recent and appropriate prioritisation of reading, particularly the focus on developing pupils' inference and deduction skills in key stage 2, is bringing about improvements to pupils' progress.
- Governors know the school well and hold you closely to account for the impact of your actions. They make good use of their professional skills, including their experience of educational leadership and risk management, to ask challenging and probing questions. They ensure that the school's website meets the requirements for the information it provides for parents through frequent checks and audits of its content. They are currently taking actions to enhance the information about the content of the school's curriculum to ensure that it fully illustrates its breadth and depth.
- The quality of teaching has improved considerably since the last inspection. Committed teachers and teaching assistants have high expectations. They share your integrity and drive to promote excellence. As a result, pupils are making increasingly stronger progress from their starting points, particularly in reading, writing and mathematics. Teachers occasionally do not seize the opportunities, presented by pupils during discussions, to explore topics or to develop answers in greater depth.
- Most pupils enter the school with levels of development that are typical for their age and make strong progress in early years. As a result, children are well prepared for the next stage of their education in key stage 1. The proportions of pupils attaining a good level of development are routinely above the national average. Pupils continue to make strong progress in key stage 1 and as a result, attain well in the Year 1 phonics screening check and the end of Year 2 national assessments, where the proportion of pupils reaching and exceeding national averages are routinely above national averages. Historically, the attainment of pupils in key stage 2 has been high. However, the progress made by pupils in key stage 2 from their starting points has remained in line with national averages for some time. Work in pupils' books and the school's assessment data show that this is now changing. Pupils are making increasingly stronger progress in reading, writing and mathematics due to the improvements in the quality of teaching. Disadvantaged pupils do well in school. They make better progress than their peers and other pupils nationally to attain highly. Work in books also shows that although pupils are now receiving greater opportunities to develop their skills in scientific enquiry, the progress that pupils make, particularly in developing their knowledge and understanding to a greater depth, is more limited.
- Attendance has remained at least in line with national average for a considerable time. In 2015/16, however, the proportion of some groups of pupils who were persistently absent rose above the national average. Current and more up-to-date information shows a more positive picture and that attendance is back to where it has been historically.

Your detailed records show that the vast majority of absences are for good reasons and are often linked to medical needs or genuine illness. You ensure that good attendance is celebrated and challenge unauthorised absences strongly. Despite this, a small number of pupils do miss out on some learning at times because their parents choose to take unauthorised holidays.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they build upon the effective actions already taken to enhance the progress that pupils make in key stage 2, including in science.

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

Yours sincerely

John Nixon
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, and some subject leaders in the school. I held a meeting with governors, including the chair and vice-chair of the governing body, and with the local authority adviser who works with your school. I spoke with pupils during lessons and around the school. I took account of the information contained within the responses to Parent View, written letters and emails from parents. I considered the responses to the online staff questionnaire. There were no responses to the pupils' online questionnaire. I spoke with parents at the start of the school day.

I visited classrooms, including one located outdoors in the school woodland, with you to observe pupils' learning, and looked at their work in books and their records of achievement. I reviewed information about pupils' progress, attainment and attendance. I scrutinised the school's self-evaluation documentation, action plans and other policies. I looked at safeguarding, evaluating the impact of the school's procedures and policies to keep children safe, including while they are online. I also scrutinised your recruitment checks and record-keeping.