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Ms Jennifer Forshaw  
Headteacher  
Kirkdale St Lawrence CofE VA Primary School  
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Dear Ms Forshaw

### **Short inspection of Kirkdale St Lawrence CofE VA Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 16 January 2018, 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 December 2012.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection, ensuring that the school continues to improve. As a community, the school is vibrant and inviting. The school increasingly receives significant numbers of pupils from a wide range of countries, many of whom speak English as an additional language. You and the leadership team work with the families of new entrants and ensure that all communication is sent home in their preferred language. You actively celebrate each pupil's family heritage and recognise their diversity within the school community.

Pupils are friendly. They are keen to share their learning and talk about their work. They said that they enjoy their learning and particularly like finding out new things. Pupils with whom I spoke during the inspection said that they are kind to one another. Parents and carers, with whom I spoke on the playground before school, were typically positive about the care and level of support that the staff show to the children. They said that the level of communication between home and school is good as is pupils' behaviour.

Since the previous inspection, you and the leadership team have continued to have a strong vision for the school. Through detailed self-evaluation, you have accurately identified areas to develop. At the last inspection, you were asked to improve attendance. You have been proactive in your approach to increasing attendance. There are significant barriers that are out of your control. The numbers of pupils on the school roll change regularly throughout each year, due in part to families moving in and out of the area. You have identified that a significant proportion of parents continue to take

their children out of school during term time to go on holiday.

Levels of parental engagement with the school are low. You follow absences up with first-response phone calls and home visits. Small improvements have been seen in overall absence for different groups of pupils since 2016. You agreed with me that there is still a lot to do in this area.

Teachers have worked successfully to make sure that pupils are given work that challenges them. Having looked at a wide range of evidence, including analysing work in pupils' books and observing lessons, I could see that pupils are stretched and challenged. Pupils make good progress from their low starting points on entry to the school. There is a good standard of work and challenge to be seen not only in pupils' mathematics and English books, but in all of their books covering a wide curriculum. For example, in Year 3, pupils apply their mathematics skills using percentages to create pie charts.

You lead teaching and learning strategically, and ensure that there are opportunities for your most experienced teachers to use and share their skills across the school. You make frequent checks on the quality of teaching, and examples of best practice are disseminated among the staff. As well as this, you work closely with a number of similar schools within the local authority. This work enables teachers to engage in a wide range of moderation and professional development activities. Teachers benefit from this training, and each one recognises their role as a leader of learning within the school.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Safeguarding arrangements in the school are effective and fit for purpose. Fire alarm and lock-down procedures are in place and are clearly communicated to all visitors. Safeguarding records are detailed, and all checks on the suitability of staff to work with children are thorough. All members of staff have received safeguarding basic awareness training. Several staff members and governors are trained in safer recruitment. You work with a range of outside agencies to ensure the safety of the pupils. When the need arises, you make referrals to children's social care and follow these up with rigour.

You provide support to families where it is needed. Pupils with whom I spoke said that they feel safe in school and they know they could share their concerns with their teachers. The school promotes safety in various ways. For example, you have regular visits from the police. The most recent work that has been carried out has been in relation to stranger danger, awareness of race hate crimes and the dangers of child criminal exploitation.

### **Inspection findings**

- During this inspection, I focused on three key lines of enquiry. The first of these was in relation to the quality of provision in the early years. During the inspection, you and I visited the Nursery and Reception classes. Historically, the proportion of children leaving the early years with a good level of development has been below the national average. The current provision is well resourced, and children have access

to a wide range of learning opportunities. When children enter the Reception class, their skills and knowledge are below those typical for their age, with particular weaknesses in speech, language and communication. Many children have not previously attended a formal early years setting. Currently, 50% of the current Reception class speak English as an additional language. You recognise that staff working in the early years must have knowledge and experience of early child development and you have deployed your staff accordingly.

- The behaviour of the children in the Nursery and Reception classes is a strength. Children engage in their learning with high levels of independence. Adult intervention and learning activities are set up to encourage dialogue. I observed children in the Reception class act out parts of the story of the 'Big bad wolf'. I observed children in the Nursery class play in the police station role-play area. You recognise that role play and the development of speech and language skills are key to ensuring that a higher proportion of children achieve a good level of development by the end of the early years.
- During the inspection, I looked at the quality of pupils' writing and at how writing is promoted across the curriculum. The school's published data shows that pupils do not do as well in writing as they do in reading or mathematics. Together, we observed lessons throughout the school and looked at a wide range of pupils' books from across the curriculum. You have identified that handwriting was one area in which pupils struggled at the end of Year 2. You have introduced a new handwriting scheme of work and, from the books that we looked at, we could see that gains have been made in this area. High levels of mobility, in terms of pupils entering and leaving the school, make published data unreliable in establishing ongoing trends in pupils' achievement. You have addressed this by ensuring that you carefully track individual pupils' progress, rather than that of classes, as the makeup of these changes all too frequently. Tracking data for current pupils shows that their progress in writing is improving across all year groups. You agreed with me that more needs to be done to raise pupils' attainment in writing to be in line with the high standards achieved in reading and mathematics.
- You recognise that a high proportion of the pupils in the school have had limited experience in life. You have identified that lack of experiences is a significant barrier to their learning. You address this by providing the pupils with a rich curriculum that enables them to acquire new learning and experiences. Pupils have lots of opportunities to write across the curriculum. You celebrate excellent writing each week during assemblies. Exemplary pieces of work are displayed along with photographs of the children. For example, pupils in Year 6 have written a motivational speech from the point of view of the England football team manager. The purpose of the writing was to deliver the speech to the team at half time as they were losing one nil. Evidence seen in books shows that pupils write with purpose across all subjects and genres.
- The final area I looked at during this inspection related to how well the leaders and governors carry out their statutory responsibilities. Pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are well cared for and receive bespoke support, and they make sustained progress from their starting points. The support that they receive is monitored closely and the attainment and progress of each individual pupil are high priorities. Governors monitor the spending of the pupil

premium to support disadvantaged pupils. This is used effectively and ensures that pupils leave the school with attainment and progress that are line with those of their peers. Governors hold you and the leadership team to account and ensure that you receive support and challenge in equal measure. Governors are aware of their safeguarding responsibilities and ensure that the school website is compliant.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they build on the effective actions to enhance the quality of writing across the school so that more pupils work at greater depth
- there is an increase in the proportion of children achieving a good level of development by the end of the early years
- they improve overall attendance by continuing to be proactive in targeting specific groups and providing support to the families of the most affected children.

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

Yours sincerely

John Donald  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During this inspection, I met with you, the deputy headteacher and members of the senior leadership team. I met with three members of the governing body and a representative of Liverpool local authority. I spoke informally with pupils at lunchtime and I spoke with parents on the playground at the start of the school day. I took into account the six responses I received to the Ofsted free-text facility. I looked at a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and information about the attainment and progress of pupils. I scrutinised the school's single central safeguarding record and checked recruitment procedures. You and I visited classes together and we looked at a number of pupils' books. I undertook a review of the school website.