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Mr Paul Edmondson
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Dear Mr Edmondson

Short inspection of Morecambe Road School

Following my visit to the school on 1 February 2018 with Jane Holmes, Ofsted Inspector, 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 January 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. There have been a number of recent changes including to leadership and to the school premises, but you and other leaders have ensured that these have led to better provision for pupils. Such improvements include the school now having a better-thought-out area for key stage 4 pupils, a new computer room and specialist rooms to provide pupils with sensory experiences and the opportunity to immerse themselves in projected pictures and sound. The school site recently suffered flooding and this caused damage to the school's heating system. The repairs to this system have been organised so the smallest possible risk or inconvenience to pupils is being caused.

The school is welcoming and friendly. Pupils work hard and behave well. Pupils were keen to talk to inspectors, even if they sometimes found this quite challenging. You have created a culture where staff are expected to provide the best possible experience for pupils. Leaders, teachers, teaching assistants and other members of staff know pupils and their needs well. They aim to find the best ways to meet these needs and do so successfully. This ensures that pupils gain in their learning and are very well cared for.

You and other leaders are honest and open in your evaluation of the school. Your accurate identification of the school's strengths helps you to build these further. In addition, your systematic development planning sets a clear framework for the continuing improvement to the school. Governors play a key role in making sure

that different subject areas are as effective as possible through their well-established subject review programme.

At the previous inspection, inspectors asked the school to improve teaching, including by raising teachers' expectations. This was to ensure that pupils, including the most able in the secondary school, made as much progress as possible. You have introduced a different approach to how pupil groups are organised. Pupils of different ages within a key stage now work together. This allows you to better match these groups to pupils' abilities and starting points. In addition, teachers and teaching assistants work closely together to make sure that their teaching challenges individual pupils. The successful teaching helps pupils to gain a range of accredited qualifications which confirm their achievement as they move from the school at the end of Year 11.

One aspect of the effective teaching is the way in which teachers are expected to make the best use of their own particular skills and experience to shape how they teach. However, this sometimes leads to differences which make it harder for others to judge whether teaching and learning is consistently as effective as possible. The school's assessment system helps staff to know how well pupils are learning. It gives them useful information to help staff to adjust their teaching if any pupil's learning slows. However, more could be done to make sure that expectations become even higher by comparing the standards this system tracks with those found in other similar schools.

The parents inspectors talked to, and those who shared their views in other ways, were generally very complimentary about the school and its work. A group of parents identified how key aspects, including the school giving their children the skills they need, the approachability of all members of staff and children wanting to be at school, make the school 'fantastic'.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors make sure that the arrangements for safeguarding pupils are comprehensive and effective. Staff pay close attention to detail in the records they keep about safeguarding. The systems in place to protect pupils are very carefully applied. For example, visitors to the school are checked thoroughly. On the day of the inspection, two unexpected visitors were not allowed to enter the school because they did not have sufficient information to confirm that they were no risk to pupils. The school provides helpful information about safeguarding on its website and in a clear leaflet for anyone who visits the school.

Training about safeguarding is regular and gives staff the knowledge and confidence to deal with any issues, should these arise.

The school site is secure. This security has recently been enhanced with the installation of electronically locking gates to give access to the school site. Pupils said that they feel safe. They told inspectors about a number of things which make them feel happy about their safety. These included aspects as diverse as the new

fences around their play areas which make sure that they cannot mistakenly run in front of traffic, and the way that adults will sort out any issues that worry them.

Inspection findings

- The improvement in the school indicates that leaders have the skills and experience to ensure that this continues. You recognise that all members of staff are able to contribute to leadership and are successful in developing this potential. For example, you support non-teaching members of staff to become teachers. In addition, the school uses training programmes about leadership to enhance middle and senior leaders' skills. You have extended the role of middle leaders by involving them more fully in planning how to improve the school.
- Governance of the school has been restructured to allow for a better match of governors' skills to the school's needs. Governors are thoughtful and provide challenge to leaders through their probing questions about the school's work. If they find that they have insufficient information to help them to understand how well an aspect of the school is performing, they are not afraid to ask leaders to provide the additional detail they need.
- Pupils make good progress, including children in the early years. Pupils' low starting points frequently mean that their gains are not identified in a fully meaningful way in the nationally published data on school performance. However, in 2017, pupils in Year 6 made progress at a similar rate to those in other schools in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils in Year 11 successfully complete a number of external qualifications, including in English, mathematics and other subjects, such as history and life skills. Where appropriate, pupils enter GCSE examinations in some subjects. In addition, pupils are successful in BTEC awards including in health and beauty, and science. The school also provides pupils with opportunities to demonstrate that their wider skills have developed. In recent years, by the time they leave the school, almost all pupils have been successful in the bronze Duke of Edinburgh's Award.
- Teaching responds well to pupils' particular needs. If there are gaps in pupils' academic or wider learning, staff ensure that additional teaching is provided. Teachers and teaching assistants form close teams where responsibility for helping different groups of pupils is clear. This approach allows staff to tightly target their teaching to support individual pupils' learning. This ensures that pupils make rapid progress. When needed, the school makes sure that pupils have the support and technological equipment they need to help them communicate. The curriculum in the school has a good balance between different subjects. Pupils enjoy the range of subjects provided and this helps them to engage with the activities provided. However, occasionally, whole-class teaching that involves some pupils less fully means that they become less interested.
- Pupils behave well and their behaviour is managed well by staff. Pupils know about the school's high expectations. They receive helpful advice about matters such as bullying and staying safe online. Teachers reinforce this advice as part of pupils' everyday learning. The number of significant incidents of poor behaviour is very small and has reduced over time. Staff receive regular training about how to make serious misbehaviour less likely. They are also trained about when it is

appropriate to use physical contact with a pupil in response to serious misbehaviour and how this can be done safely. Leaders ensure that any such instances are properly recorded and then followed up in detail in order to reduce the chance of a similar problem in the future.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the school's assessment system is further developed, including in how leaders and teachers cross-check the standards it defines against those in other, similar, schools
- approaches to teaching and learning in the school are used consistently so that it is easier to ensure that all groups of pupils make the fastest possible progress.

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

Yours sincerely

David Selby
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, we met with you and other senior leaders to discuss the school's effectiveness. One of us had a discussion with the chair and other members of the governing body. One of us had a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. We met with a group of pupils and saw others around the school during lessons and breaks. One of us met with a group of members of staff other than senior leaders. One of us toured the school with you. We observed teaching and learning in classes across the school. We scrutinised a sample of pupils' books and other work. We examined documents including information about the safeguarding of pupils, the school's self-evaluation document, the development plan, records concerning teaching and learning, and information about pupils' achievement. We considered 12 responses completed this school year to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, including two additional written responses. We met with parents and received further information from a phone call to Ofsted from a parent. We also considered comments made by parents in a school survey completed early this school year. We reviewed 16 responses from members of staff to their online questionnaire and 22 responses from pupils to a similar questionnaire.