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6 March 2018

Mrs Georgina Forshaw  
Headteacher  
Lydiate Primary School  
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Dear Mrs Forshaw

### **Short inspection of Lydiate Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 20 February 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 March 2014.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

I am very impressed by your sheer determination to move this school onwards and upwards. You were appointed as headteacher six months ago and inherited a school where standards, in some areas of the curriculum, were in decline. In a short period of time, you have really got under the skin of the school and have established what the school does well and what needs to be done to improve outcomes for pupils. At the time of your appointment, there was no deputy headteacher in post. You very quickly seconded a deputy headteacher from a local school to support you. This is a temporary arrangement.

In addition to improving outcomes, we both agree that the senior leadership team must be stabilised swiftly. You also recognise that the roles of middle leaders of subjects such as science, history and geography need to be developed further and that the deployment of teaching assistants is not as effective as it could be.

You have not shied away from these challenges. For example, a new assessment and tracking system has been put in place to ensure that pupils' progress is now tracked and monitored more closely. Teachers' performance management targets have been revised, ensuring that their expectations of what pupils can achieve are now much higher. The quality of teaching is monitored with greater rigour and

teachers are now more accountable for the progress their pupils are making.

You have the full backing of your staff, who feel valued and supported. Morale is high and there is a real feeling of 'team spirit' among your staff. They are fully aware of the school's key priorities and their part in achieving these goals.

Pupils skip into school with happy, smiling faces which never waiver throughout the day. Relationships at all levels are respectful. Behaviour in class and around the school is good. Pupils were keen to talk to me. They are proud of their school, feel safe and enjoy attending. They would not hesitate to discuss any worries or concerns with staff. Pupils have a good awareness of the different forms of bullying and the distress that it can cause. Those that I talked to told me that bullying at Lydiate Primary school is a rare occurrence. Pupils also have a good awareness of how to stay safe when online and recognise the dangers of disclosing their password or personal details to a stranger. They told me about the exciting range of out-of-school clubs that your staff give so generously of their time to run. Pupils enjoy the responsibilities you entrust to them as school councillors, eco warriors and reading buddies to younger pupils in the school.

Most parents and carers are supportive of the school. Some, typically, commented that their children are 'receiving a first-rate education'. Others stated that 'the new headteacher has made a positive start and her commitment to improving the school is evident'. Some parents expressed concerns about poor levels of communication between the school and themselves. You are aware of this and plans are afoot to address this matter. For example, the school website is being revamped to ensure that it is much more accessible to parents.

Most of the areas for improvement highlighted at the last inspection have been met. As a result of a recent review of governance, the level of support and challenge offered to the school is now strong. Governors now have a secure understanding of what the school does well and the priorities for development.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You and your staff work closely to ensure that the school is a safe and welcoming place for all. There is a strong culture of safeguarding at your school and all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You work closely with outside agencies to ensure that appropriate support is offered to families facing challenging circumstances.

Staff are vigilant about pupils' welfare and know what to do if they have any concerns. They also understand that anyone can make a referral to the relevant authorities, not just the designated leaders for safeguarding. Staff also talk with confidence about the latest national concerns of radicalisation and extremism.

There are comprehensive procedures in place for the recruitment and selection of staff. No one is allowed to start working at the school until all appropriate checks have been completed. The single central record contains all the required detail.

Visitors' credentials are closely checked before they are allowed access to the school.

## **Inspection findings**

- Since your appointment, you have received effective levels of support from a deputy headteacher who has been seconded to your school. However, this arrangement is for a limited period of time and is due to end soon. Both you and your governors recognise the importance of appointing another permanent senior leader swiftly to ensure the stability of the senior leadership team.
- Children come into the early years with knowledge and skills that are broadly typical for their age. During their time in the early years, children make steady progress. However, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development has declined in recent years and is now just in line with the national average. Furthermore, the most able children do not achieve as well as they are capable of in reading and writing. From our observations, we both agreed that activities led by teachers and in independent play areas do not consistently challenge children to do their very best. In addition, we are in agreement that the environment could be used to better effect to promote reading and writing skills. For example, there are few opportunities for children to develop their writing skills in independent play areas and books are not prominently displayed in the environment to attract children's interest.
- Outcomes at key stage 1 dipped in recent years, particularly for disadvantaged pupils. As result of recent initiatives, the tide is turning and outcomes in reading, writing and maths are improving. However, work in pupils' books shows that activities are not always matched to pupils' needs in mathematics. In addition, at times the use of worksheets with small boxes prevents pupils writing at length and greater depth. This is most notable in subjects such as history and geography.
- Pupils in key stage 1 are keen readers and their comprehension skills are developing well. However, some children told the inspector that they find their books too easy, while others stated that teachers do not give them advice on how to improve their reading. An examination of a sample of reading records confirms that this is the case.
- Over time, progress and outcomes are stronger at key stage 2, particularly in writing and for disadvantaged pupils. From reviewing the school's own assessment information, looking in pupils' books and listening to pupils read it is evident that current pupils are making strong progress. You recognise that the challenge for the school is to ensure that this strong progress in reading, writing and mathematics is sustained until the end of the current academic year and beyond.
- Although skilled, some teaching assistants lack direction from the class teacher. Consequently, they are not always deployed effectively to support pupils with their learning and development, especially at the start of a lesson. We both agree that this is particularly evident in the Reception classes and key stage 1.
- Pupils talked to me about their learning in subjects such as history, geography

and science. However, the role of the middle leaders of these subjects is not as well developed as those of English and mathematics. For example, you do not expect them yet to monitor the quality of teaching or the progress that different groups of pupils make as they move through the school.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the senior leadership team is stabilised quickly
- a greater proportion of children in the early years achieve a good level of development and that children are consistently challenged, especially the most able in reading and writing
- a greater proportion of pupils reach the expected and higher standards at the end of key stage 1, particularly those who are disadvantaged
- the current strong progress in reading writing and mathematics at key stage 2 is sustained until the end of the academic year and beyond, particularly for those who are disadvantaged
- the role of middle leaders of subjects such as science, history and geography is developed so that they have a bigger impact on teaching, learning and assessment
- teaching assistants are always deployed to best effect especially in the early years and key stage 1.

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

Yours sincerely

Sheila Iwaskow  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection I met with you, staff and members of the governing body. I also met with pupils to seek their views about the school. I spoke on the telephone with a representative from the local authority. Together we toured the school to see the learning that was taking place in key stage 1 and in the Reception classes. I looked at work in pupils' books and on display. I listened to pupils read from Years 2 and 6. A range of documentation was considered, including that relating to safeguarding, the school improvement plan and the schools' own assessment information on current pupils' progress. I also took account of the 24 responses to

Ofsted's online questionnaire Parent View and 18 responses to Ofsted's free-text facility.