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Miss Nicola Booth
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Dear Miss Booth

Short inspection of Gwladys Street Primary and Nursery School

Following my visit to the school on 21 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 September 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You are supported very well by your deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher, and together you make a very effective team. You are reflective in the decisions you make, ensuring that pupils receive a high standard of education in a caring and supportive environment. Staff and governors share your high expectations. The school's motto embodies your aspirations that every pupil should have: 'Golden Opportunities for Achievement and Learning' to reach their goals.

You and your staff have effectively tackled the areas for improvement from the last inspection. Staff appreciate the opportunities that they have to share skills and knowledge with each other, and with colleagues in other schools. This is particularly helpful to staff who are new to teaching, who appreciate the support and encouragement you give. You have ensured that staff have the skills, knowledge and understanding they need in order to plan carefully crafted activities which enhance pupils' learning and the progress that they make. Learning activities accurately meet the needs of pupils and provide appropriate challenge, for example through the 'active maths' challenges, which are enjoyed by pupils and shared with parents and carers. As a result, the proportion of pupils who reached the expected standard in mathematics by the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2 in 2017 increased considerably from the previous year.

You have made changes to the way that you teach phonics and reading across the school. As a result, the school's own assessment information shows that an

increasing proportion of pupils are now working at a level that is typical for their age in phonics. A higher proportion of pupils are working at the standard expected for their age in reading, with an increased proportion of older pupils working at a greater depth. The strong relationships within the school, and pupils' positive attitudes towards learning, contribute effectively to the progress that they make. Pupils take pride in their work and understand clearly the next steps in their learning. A typical comment was, 'I feel more confident when I'm reading. My vocabulary has improved and I use more descriptive words in my writing now.' However, despite these improvements, you have accurately identified that you need to further embed the changes you have made, and accelerate the progress that pupils make, particularly for disadvantaged pupils, by the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2.

Pupils are polite, courteous and confident. The older pupils take their responsibilities very seriously as 'mini police', members of committees, and as role models for the younger pupils. They enjoy the opportunities they have to participate in a wide range of activities, including multi-sports, trips, residential visits and the school fairs at Christmas and in the summer. They spoke excitedly about the projects they are set for homework. For example, pupils in Year 5 are working on presentations, fact files and models about space. Teachers encourage pupils to be creative and resilient in order to solve problems. Pupils in Year 4 are very proud of the way they raised funds so that they could adopt a gorilla from the local zoo as part of their work on animal conservation. They are extremely proud of their school and their community. They feel valued and cared for.

Most parents I spoke to during the inspection were very positive about the school and the care, guidance and support they receive from you and your staff. Parents of pupils who are new to the school are very pleased with the way their children settle in so quickly and the progress that they make. Parents said that they find the school's new app very useful as a way of communication, and that the website is very helpful with information and ideas for helping their children at home. However, the very small proportion of parents who accessed Ofsted's online questionnaire and text service shared their concerns about how information is communicated and about staff absences. Governors recognise the importance of working well with parents in relation to communication, better attendance, and taking part in school activities.

Safeguarding is effective.

School leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements, including online filtering and monitoring arrangements, are fit for purpose. An effective and efficient system ensures that the most vulnerable pupils are identified quickly and that they receive the help they need. Pupils have a very clear understanding of how to keep themselves safe, particularly online. Pupils told me that they worry about the speed of cars on local roads and have taken the initiative to contact the police. Road safety is very important at your school.

Pupils feel safe in school. They said that bullying is rare and behaviour is good most

of the time. They are confident that any inappropriate behaviour will be dealt with very quickly and in an appropriate manner. Staff and governors receive regular training and know what to do if they have any concerns.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection, we looked at several lines of enquiry. The first was about how effectively the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils has been used. You have accurately identified the key barriers to learning for disadvantaged pupils. You use a range of assessment information to identify the precise gaps in pupils' learning to ensure that they receive the help that they need to catch up quickly. You have ensured that staff have the skills and resources they need to help disadvantaged pupils and that activities closely match pupils' needs. As a result, progress is improving. The learning mentor provides nurture and guidance for the most vulnerable pupils. This enhances their attitudes to learning and has a positive impact on the improving progress that they make. The school's own assessment information, and work seen in pupils' books, indicate that outcomes for disadvantaged pupils are improving over time. However, you acknowledge that not enough disadvantaged pupils are reaching the standard expected nationally by the end of key stage 2.
- We also discussed the impact of phonics on improving reading across the school. The appointment of a phonics champion has ensured that phonics is taught consistently from Reception to Year 2. You provide opportunities for staff to share their teaching expertise, and monitor sessions regularly to ensure that consistency and high expectations are maintained. You quickly identify gaps in pupils' knowledge, including in Year 3, so that pupils can receive the help they need to catch up quickly. You have ensured that staff have the knowledge, skills and resources they need to teach reading effectively. Learning activities accurately meet the needs of the pupils and challenge them appropriately. The books pupils read meet their needs, and match accurately with the phonics knowledge they have, providing the appropriate amount of challenge. As a result, pupils are becoming competent, confident readers.
- Teachers use assessment information efficiently to identify pupils who are falling behind with their reading. The school's own assessment information indicates that the vast majority of pupils are making accelerated progress from their starting points. Leaders promote the importance of reading effectively with pupils. Pupils talk enthusiastically about the positive changes to the way reading is taught. They enjoy the variety of activities that are used very effectively to increase vocabulary and word knowledge, inference and comprehension skills. Older pupils who spoke to me said that their improving vocabulary is having a positive impact on the quality of their writing. They take great pride in their work and in their achievements. Workshops for parents on phonics and reading ensure that they have the skills they need to help their children at home. However, some younger pupils said that they do not always read regularly at home. This is hindering the progress that they make.
- We looked at actions that have been taken by leaders to improve outcomes for children at the end of Reception. Parents commented that their children settle

quickly into the routines of school as a result of the well-considered activities and events they attend in the summer term. The vast majority of children start school with knowledge and skills below those typical for their age. The barriers to children's learning are identified quickly, particularly the development of language and communication and personal, social and emotional development. You work with other professionals to ensure that staff have the knowledge and skills that they need to accelerate the progress that children make.

- Parents speak highly of how well your staff know the children and how happy they are to come to school each day. Regular 'stay and play' sessions are becoming more popular. Workshops about how you teach phonics, reading and early mathematics provide parents with the opportunity to develop the skills that they need to support their children's learning at home. Positive relationships and attitudes to learning contribute strongly to the substantial progress that children make. To ensure that your assessments are accurate, you work closely with colleagues in other schools. The proportion of children reaching a good level of development by the end of Reception is improving.
- We also looked at attendance. You know your families extremely well. Staff robustly follow up when pupils are absent, and work closely with other agencies to support families, such as by establishing morning routines at home, being picked up by the minibus and attending the popular breakfast club. For a small proportion of pupils, health-related issues have led to considerable absence from school. You have been relentless in your drive to improve the attendance of a number of pupils who are persistently absent. As a result, attendance for these pupils is improving.
- You have introduced a number of imaginative incentives, which are having a positive impact on attendance. Pupils understand the importance of attending school regularly. However, attendance remains below the national average, which hinders the progress rates for pupils who do not attend school regularly. You have rightly identified the need to continue to develop ways to engage parents, so that they can support their children and the progress that they make.
- Finally, we discussed the high number of fixed-term exclusions in 2017. No inappropriate behaviour was seen during the inspection. Pupils' attitude to learning is extremely positive. Pupils are polite and respectful. Positive relationships between pupils and adults promote high levels of cooperation and support for each other. This contributes positively to improving the progress that pupils make. The learning mentor regularly goes 'above and beyond' to support a small proportion of pupils who can sometimes display extreme behaviour. Pupils who spoke to me during the inspection said that behaviour is improving because of the work she does to help pupils to make the right choices about how to behave and to 'feel better about themselves'. Pupils feel confident that any inappropriate behaviour will be dealt with quickly and in the appropriate manner. The school's own information shows that the number of behavioural incidents is reducing.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- embed the changes made to the teaching of reading to ensure that a higher proportion of pupils reach the expected standard by the end of key stage 1, particularly disadvantaged pupils
- build on the progress pupils make in reading, so that a higher proportion of pupils are working at a greater depth by the end of key stage 2
- develop even more ways to engage parents, so that they can help their children to progress, particularly in reading, and that they make sure their children attend school every day.

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

Yours sincerely

Amanda Stringer
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you, other members of the leadership team and staff. I also met with the chair of the governing body and three other governors. I met with a representative of the local authority. I conducted a learning walk with you and we visited classrooms, where I had the opportunity to speak with pupils and look at their work. I met formally with a group of pupils during the day and I spoke with parents at the start of the school day. I took account of the 14 free-text comments, the 27 responses to Parent View (Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents) and the 77 responses to the most recent parent review you have carried out. I scrutinised pupils' assessment information, the school's self-evaluation document and your school improvement plan. I scrutinised the single central record, and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection procedures and practices.