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Miss J Hyde
Headteacher
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Dear Miss Hyde

Short inspection of Ince CofE Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 6 June 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 October 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Your school environment is bright and welcoming, providing pupils with many opportunities to learn both inside and outdoors. You enjoy close links with your local church. Pupils are provided with enjoyable activities in school, such as the 'messy church', which allow them to develop further their understanding of the Christian faith.

Members of staff are proud of their school. All those who responded to the staff survey noted that they enjoy working at the school and that the school has a culture that is aspirational for all pupils. Similarly, pupils told me that they are very proud of their school. They think very highly of their teachers, who, they say, offer them a great deal of help and support.

You welcome the views of parents and carers. Questionnaires are regularly provided to allow them to express their views. Additionally, a weekly coffee morning is held, where parents can discuss their children's progress in school.

Your governing body has developed into a strong and effective team. This was evident during the inspection. Governors undertake a broad range of training and are regular visitors to the school. They observe lessons and talk with pupils and with teachers to develop their awareness of pupils' progress. They attend your weekly parents' coffee morning to maintain close links with families. Additionally, they

analyse reports provided to them by subject leaders. As a consequence, governors are well placed to challenge leaders about pupils' progress and attainment across the school.

You have been successful in addressing the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection report. You restructured your curriculum to ensure that pupils have the opportunity to write at length across many subjects. The success of this initiative was evident in the extended writing produced by pupils throughout the school. During the inspection, for example, children in Nursery were supported to write prescriptions while enjoying role play in a well-created doctor's surgery.

We discussed areas where further work is required to support the school's improvement. Over time, the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent from school has been above that seen nationally. While much has been done to address this issue, leaders are aware that further work is required to reduce absence rates. Additionally, while new initiatives have been put in place to support the teaching of reading, we agreed that further time is required to consolidate these and to ensure that pupils are being taught effectively to apply a broad range of reading skills. Finally, we agreed that teachers must ensure that the most able pupils are challenged further to develop their understanding and skills in reading, writing and mathematics in key stages 1 and 2.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Your school site is secure and signing-in procedures for visitors are thorough. You ensure that all visitors receive detailed information relating to the safety of pupils, as well as personal safety, such as the procedures to follow in the event of an emergency.

Your arrangements for checking the suitability of new members of staff to work with children are thorough. On appointment, staff receive detailed information regarding the school's safeguarding procedures. All staff and governors receive regular training which gives them a clear understanding of how to keep pupils safe.

The pupils I spoke to during the inspection told me that they feel safe in school. They were able to describe a range of training that they have received, such as safety near canals and the importance of healthy relationships. Pupils were proud of their role in ensuring that bullying does not take place in school. Pupils act as 'helping hands'. These are mediators who help to sort out relationship difficulties in the playground. As a result of this focus, pupils told me that behaviour has greatly improved in classrooms and on the playground.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection, I discussed a number of lines of enquiry with you. You have a very clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for further development. This is evident in your own evaluation and development planning.

Therefore, the lines of enquiry discussed were no surprise to you.

- The first line of enquiry considered the effectiveness of the actions leaders are taking to reduce the rates of persistent absence. You ensure that parents are contacted on the first day of their child's absence and maintain regular contact following that point. Pupils are given rewards for good attendance, such as prizes and certificates. Your 'early morning music initiative' welcomes pupils into school with lively and engaging tunes for them to enjoy. Your pastoral leader works hard to ensure that attendance data is closely monitored. This enables leaders to act quickly when patterns of poor attendance are identified. Individual target and support plans are prepared for pupils. As a consequence of your actions, the rate of persistent absence in school is declining. However, the current figure is still above the rate seen nationally and leaders are aware that additional measures are required to reduce this figure further.
- We then analysed the success of leaders in improving pupils' performance in reading at key stages 1 and 2. Leaders have worked effectively to further develop the teaching of phonics in the early years and key stage 1. The approach to the teaching of letters and sounds is focused and progressive. New books have been purchased to ensure that the sounds learned by pupils in school can be practised at home. As a consequence, attainment has increased each year and the proportion of pupils reaching the national threshold in the Year 1 phonics screening check is consistently well above that seen nationally.
- You are aware that this early success in the learning of phonics is not reflected in the progress and attainment of pupils in reading by the end of key stages 1 and 2. Leaders are addressing this issue by raising the profile of reading throughout school. In addition to a large library, reading corners are available for pupils in all classrooms. Teachers provide book baskets of selected literature, which are encouraging pupils to read widely and often. This work has shown a measure of success. Leaders' monitoring of performance shows that pupils' reading is improving throughout school and the number of pupils who read for pleasure has increased. However, we agreed that pupils do not have the same access to high-quality non-fiction texts as they do to fiction. This is limiting the range of vocabulary that they experience on a regular basis.
- Leaders have altered the way in which reading is taught at key stage 2. This is to ensure that pupils have increased opportunities to develop their reading comprehension skills and to enhance their vocabulary. Additionally, pupils take part in regular focused reading activities where their skills are developed. As a consequence, your most recent school performance information shows that progress is improving. Nevertheless, we agreed that more work is required to ensure that pupils' progress increases further so that their attainment by the end of key stages 1 and 2 matches that seen nationally.
- My final line of enquiry considered how effectively leaders and teachers ensure that additional challenge is provided for the most able pupils in reading, writing and mathematics at both key stages 1 and 2. Leaders' detailed analysis of performance data shows that the progress and attainment of this group are more of an issue for the increasing number of pupils who are more recent arrivals at the school. There is a more positive picture for the pupils who have attended

your school since the early years. Nevertheless, during the inspection, an analysis of pupils' work highlighted that teachers did not routinely provide the most able pupils with the opportunities to develop the skills necessary to perform at the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- persistent absence continues to reduce to reflect rates seen nationally
- the most able pupils at key stages 1 and 2 are challenged further to develop their understanding and skills in reading, writing and mathematics
- pupils' progress in reading improves and attainment reflects that seen nationally by the end of key stages 1 and 2
- pupils have access to a broad range of high-quality non-fiction books.

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 Wigan. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Gill Pritchard
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, your two deputy headteachers, the assistant headteacher and pastoral leader to discuss issues relating to school improvement. I also met with six governors, including the chair of the governing body. I spoke with the school's business manager about staff recruitment procedures. I met with subject leaders to discuss pupils' current performance in the school and your pastoral team to discuss safeguarding procedures. I also met with the school's independent improvement professional. I had a formal discussion with a group of pupils about their personal development, behaviour and welfare. We also discussed their learning.

Accompanied by you, I visited a range of classes across the school. I observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and as they moved around the school. I scrutinised examples of pupils' work and reviewed documents, including your record of checks on the suitability of staff and volunteers to work with children. I also examined the school's self-evaluation, improvement planning and current performance information. I took account of the school's parent survey information over a number of years. Additionally, I considered 10 responses to Ofsted's staff survey and eight

responses in free text to Parent View, Ofsted's online parent survey. I also spoke with parents informally at the end of the school day and considered information posted on the school's website.