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Mr Richard Jackson
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Jackson

Short inspection of Hillview Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 26 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 April 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Although you were new to the role of headteacher in April 2014, your knowledge of the school runs deep from your time as deputy. Since your appointment you have made some important changes to strengthen leadership, including appointing a new deputy headteacher. Together, you have created a strong team of skilled staff who support your ambitious vision for the school. These changes have had a positive impact, most notably on improvements in the early years and the progress pupils make by the end of key stage 2 in reading and mathematics.

You and the leadership team accurately evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the school. You have created an improvement plan which identifies the most important priorities. You support staff well to deliver the plan and you have implemented rigorous processes to monitor the impact of the school's work. The quality of teaching has continued to improve under your leadership.

You have efficiently tackled the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. You have introduced new ways of teaching mathematics and made sure that staff are well trained and confident in teaching mathematics. Pupils have frequent opportunities to solve problems and develop their reasoning skills. They do this, for example, in Year 1 when using clues to identify the properties and position of different shapes. They were challenged further when asked to create their own mathematical problem for a friend to solve. Audible gasps of pleasure show pupils' enjoyment of mathematics when the challenges are completed. This enthusiasm was endorsed in conversations with pupils

across the school who told me that mathematics is one of their favourite subjects. As a result of these measures, results for mathematics are consistently above the national average by the end of key stage 2.

At the last inspection you were also asked to help pupils develop more sophisticated reading skills. Your own evaluation found that for some pupils' progress in reading was hampered because their early language skills were not well developed. The governors backed your plans to provide more help for younger pupils to enable them to gain a good understanding of phonics and to improve their reading comprehension skills. Staff training, additional adult support for pupils and new resources enabled you to implement these plans with positive effect. Your own tracking information for current pupils supports the published data that shows they make good progress in reading.

The school is calm and orderly. Pupils listen attentively to their teachers so that lessons proceed without interruption. They told me that they enjoy school and that most pupils get on well together. They are polite and considerate towards each other and to visitors. Parents agree that the school is 'a happy, caring place' and almost all would recommend it to others. Pupils' good attendance and punctuality are a feature of their enjoyment of school.

Governors take a keen interest in the school and visit it regularly. They are well informed about the progress the school is making. They effectively use their expertise and experience to support you and other leaders and also to find out where improvements are needed. For example, they ask incisive questions about the impact of the pupil premium funding on improving experiences and results for disadvantaged pupils. Governors review their own skills to identify strengths and training needs. When a vacancy arises, they deliberately recruit governors who can further the needs of the school. Notwithstanding these strengths, governors recognise that the school website has not been kept under regular review.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are effective. You and senior leaders are determined to put the safety of pupils first, even when faced with challenges. Pupils confirmed that they were happy and felt safe in school.

Governors regularly check the effectiveness of the school's work to keep pupils safe. They keep themselves well informed with safeguarding training and successfully use their knowledge to ensure that the school's safeguarding procedures are compliant with statutory regulations.

The safety and well-being of pupils are integral to all aspects of the school's work. Staff, governors and pupils are rightly proud of achieving the Stonewall Silver Award that recognises the school's success in tackling bullying and celebrating diversity. The preventative work that the school does means that pupils are very well equipped to recognise different types of bullying and know what to do on the rare occasions that it occurs.

Pupils are also taught how to protect themselves when online. They talk with confidence about the dangers posed by the internet and have good strategies for recognising and reporting problems.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection, I wanted to find out whether children in the early years were making enough progress. You have strengthened the leadership of the early years and made significant improvements to the outdoor area. These initiatives are having a positive impact. Your assessments show that many children start school with knowledge and skills below the typical level for their age. By the time they leave Reception, the number of children reaching a good level of development is similar to that in other schools nationally. However, the number of children who go beyond the expected level in reading, writing or mathematics is below the national average. This is in part because some of the activities are not demanding enough for the most able children. For example, in the muddy area children have clipboards and crayons but chances are missed to encourage them to read, pronounce and write words related to their activity.
- Next, I considered why pupils' progress in writing lags behind that in reading and mathematics. The progress that pupils have made in writing for the last three years has fluctuated. It was better than the national average in 2015 but significantly below average in 2016. It recovered in 2017 to just below average but few pupils were working at greater depth in their writing at the end of key stage 1 or key stage 2. You have taken action to improve writing, making it a priority across the school. Effective phonics teaching is giving pupils the confidence to write with increasing fluency in Year 1. Pupils are taught to evaluate and edit their own work. Older pupils assess each other's work and explain the reasons for their judgements to deepen their understanding. There are ample opportunities for pupils to practise writing in subjects other than English and they apply their skills accurately. Work in pupils' books shows that these approaches are helping to improve their writing. This is supported by your own assessments which show that a higher proportion of pupils are on track to meet the standards expected of them. You have recognised that increasing the number of children working at greater depth remains an area for improvement.
- I also wanted to find out whether the support given to disadvantaged pupils was helping them to catch up in reading, writing and mathematics. The standards reached by disadvantaged pupils in 2017 appeared to be lower at the end of key stages 1 and 2 than the national average. There are a small number of disadvantaged pupils in each year group, which means that the data must be treated with caution. However, you are not complacent. You have implemented rigorous processes to enable you to closely track the progress of individual pupils. You have implemented a raft of strategies including identifying the barriers to learning for each individual. You have provided extra teaching time to help pupils overcome these barriers. You work closely with parents to help improve attendance. Overall, good teaching is helping pupils to learn quickly so that results for disadvantaged pupils at the end of Year 6 are improving.
- My next line of enquiry was to consider whether the curriculum provided opportunities for pupils to make progress in a wide range of subjects. This is because I was not able

to find information which covered the full breadth of the curriculum on the school's website. Leaders are rightly proud of the rich variety of experiences that promote pupils' academic, personal and social skills well, including an exciting gardening project. Each class grows its own vegetables and learns about the health benefits when using them for cooking. Subject leaders are enthusiastic and have a sound grasp of what is being covered in their area of responsibility. Pupils develop a good understanding of their cultural heritage when exploring changes to the local area, for example the Mersey Gateway. However, leaders do not assess the progress that pupils make in subjects other than English, mathematics and science. This means that there is limited information about the impact of teaching on pupils' learning in these areas.

- Finally, we discussed the information provided on the school's website. You and the governors are aware of the weaknesses of the website, which does not publish all of the information that it should in order to meet requirements. For example, it does not contain the correct information about what is taught in each subject and year group. Similarly, some of the school's policies on the website were out of date at the start of the inspection, including the child protection policy. More recent policies were available in the school and were uploaded before the end of the inspection. Governors are taking action to make sure that there is a system of checking whether the school and the governing body comply with all statutory regulations.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- subject leadership is further developed so that leaders can evaluate the impact of teaching on pupils' learning in a wide range of subjects
- they continue to raise expectations from the early years onwards so that more pupils reach the higher standard, particularly in writing, by the end of key stages 1 and 2
- they systematically check that the school meets all of its statutory duties, particularly in relation to information on the website and the content of its policies.

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

Yours sincerely

Catherine Parkinson
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection I met with you, the deputy headteacher and some subject leaders. I met with the school's business manager. I spoke with a representative of the local authority and the school improvement partner. I met with members of the governing body, including the vice chair. I visited several classes with you to observe teaching and learning. Together with some teachers, I looked at pupils' work. I met with a group of pupils from across the school. I took account of the 41 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and evaluated 27 free-text responses. I considered the 17 responses from staff to the Ofsted online questionnaire and 63 responses from pupils. I looked at a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and the school development plan. I viewed a range of information about pupils' attainment and progress. I scrutinised the safeguarding documents and I undertook a review of the school's website.