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Miss Vanessa Payne
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Dear Miss Payne

Short inspection of Knowsley Junior School

Following my visit to the school on 9 January 2019, 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 February 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in specific areas. This may indicate that the school has improved significantly overall. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection will be a section 5 inspection.

You have developed a strong and dynamic leadership team at Knowsley Junior School. Accountability is clear and there are good lines of communication. Middle leaders have great enthusiasm for their roles and have worked effectively to improve standards across the whole curriculum. In some subjects, for example history, the high quality of the school's work has been recognised through local and national quality mark awards.

Staff are fully supportive of the leadership team. They told me that the school is a happy place and that there is always somebody to turn to if they need support. All members of staff who responded to the staff survey said that the school is well led and managed. They said that leaders do all they can to ensure that the school has a motivated, respected and effective staff team. They feel well supported by senior leaders and are proud to work at the school.

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school. They recognise

the strong progress that their children make and appreciate the school's caring ethos and the support that their children receive. One parent wrote on Parent View that staff are 'supportive, caring, compassionate and enthusiastic in all that they do. Nothing is ever too much trouble.'

Pupils enjoy school and talk with great enthusiasm about their learning. They have extremely positive attitudes to their work and this contributes to the strong progress that they make. Their behaviour is exceptionally good. They get on extremely well with one another and the adults who teach them.

Together with your team, you have successfully addressed the areas for improvement that were identified at the previous inspection. You were asked to further improve teaching and raise pupils' achievement. The high-quality work that I saw in pupils' books shows that you have made excellent progress in improving standards. There have also been year-on-year improvements to attainment and progress. The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics in 2018 was significantly above the national average.

At the previous inspection you were also asked to strengthen leadership by tracking pupils' progress more effectively. You have worked successfully with other leaders to address this issue. You meet regularly with teachers to review the impact of their teaching on the progress that pupils are making. This enables you to identify where pupils are falling behind in their learning and provide additional support as required. Your improvement plans also incorporate specific targets for different groups of pupils. This helps leaders and governors to have a clear understanding of standards across the school.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding at Knowsley Junior School. Pupils' safety is given the highest priority and all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Appropriate checks are made on all adults who work at the school and record-keeping is extensive and detailed. Staff take their safeguarding responsibilities very seriously. They receive appropriate and timely training on safeguarding matters and understand the school's safeguarding policies and procedures. The school engages with external agencies where necessary to provide support for pupils who are vulnerable. The school's systems ensure that there is clear recording of the chronology of any concerns. Governors make regular checks on the effectiveness of the school's work to keep pupils safe. They help to ensure that safeguarding arrangements are compliant and effective.

The pupils I spoke with during this inspection said that they feel safe and secure in school. They showed an age-appropriate awareness of how to stay safe when using the internet. They said that bullying is extremely rare at the school and that staff quickly sort out any problems. Almost every parent who responded to the Ofsted online questionnaire agreed that their children are safe and well looked after in school.

Inspection findings

- The first line of enquiry that I explored during this inspection was to establish how successful the school has been in improving pupils' progress in writing. I found clear evidence in books that current pupils across all year groups are making strong progress in this area. There have been improvements in the standards achieved at the end of key stage 2 over the past two years. Pupils have regular opportunities to improve their writing skills, not just in English lessons but in subjects across the whole curriculum. Some of the writing that I saw was of exceptionally high quality, with pupils using the full range of sentence types, appropriate and precise vocabulary, and complex punctuation. Pupils across the school also take great care with their presentation, and handwriting is a particular strength.
- My second line of enquiry was how well pupils are achieving in subjects other than mathematics and English. Along with other school leaders you have developed a broad and exciting curriculum. Pupils make strong progress and learn extremely well. Effective teaching helps them to develop their knowledge, understanding and skills to an exceptionally good level in a range of subjects. The work I saw in science and history was of an extremely high standard and in many cases beautifully presented. Pupils across the school also receive specialist teaching in French. During this inspection I observed pupils speaking confidently in French and saw evidence of good progress in their books. Pupils also value the many opportunities they have to participate in sport and music and the broad range of trips, clubs and wider opportunities that are available at the school.
- My final line of enquiry was to look at whether sufficient challenge is being provided for the most able pupils in reading, writing and mathematics. I found evidence of good levels of challenge in English for pupils of higher ability. This was clearly evident in the quality of their written work. There has also been a strong and effective focus on developing pupils' reading skills. Older pupils who I spoke with, read widely and often. I visited classes where the weekly 'Book Club' was taking place. Pupils read with confidence, demonstrating excellent inference and comprehension skills. Teachers used questioning skilfully to explore pupils' understanding and challenge them to think more deeply about the author's intentions. The proportion of pupils achieving the higher standard in reading at the end of key stage 2 was well above the national average in 2018.
- I also saw evidence of good challenge for the most able pupils in mathematics books. The 2018 key stage 2 results showed that many pupils made good progress and an above-average proportion achieved the higher standard. Most teachers set work that challenges pupils and helps to develop their reasoning skills. However, this was not the case in all classes. The work I saw in pupils' books showed that some teachers do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to use and apply their mathematical knowledge and skills to investigate and solve problems.
- The school has many other strengths. For example, disadvantaged pupils receive highly effective support and make strong progress in their learning. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils achieving the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics was above the national average for all pupils in 2018. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is also strong. Staff make regular

reference to the school's 'rights respecting charter'. This captures the rights and responsibilities on which the school's highly inclusive ethos is based. Through a well-structured programme, pupils learn about sensitive issues such as mental health and domestic violence. At the heart of the school's work in this area is the importance of respecting others, valuing diversity and developing pupils' awareness of the challenges and opportunities that life in modern Britain provides.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils in all classes are routinely challenged by activities that deepen their fluency, reasoning and mastery of mathematics.

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

Yours sincerely

Paul Tomkow
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection I held meetings with you, the assistant headteachers, several middle leaders and four governors, including the chair of the governing body. I also met with representatives from the local authority. I visited all classrooms to observe teaching and learning. I looked at work in pupils' books and listened to some pupils read. I spoke with a group of pupils about their experience of school and observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at dinner time. I reviewed a range of documentation including the single central record, the school's self-evaluation, the school's development plan and records relating to the monitoring of teaching and learning. I also took account of the 35 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and the 22 responses to the staff survey.