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1 February 2019

Mrs Linda Speed
Headteacher
Longton Lane Community Primary School
Longton Lane
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Dear Mrs Speed

Short inspection of Longton Lane Community Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 17 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 January 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. The continuing success of the school is the result of your committed and self-assured leadership. You have high expectations and a strong vision that places pupils at the heart of all that you do.

You are ably assisted by your deputy headteacher and an assured, enthusiastic staff team. Together, you have created an environment that promotes the care and nurture of the whole school community. Children are rightly proud of their school and feel the sense of belonging that has been created and is a strong feature of the school.

The very large majority of parents and carers who spoke to me, or responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, are very positive about the school and would recommend it to others. They find you and the staff team approachable and always willing to help.

Staff who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire are proud to be part of Longton Lane. They feel that it is extremely well led and managed and appreciate the opportunities they have for training and development. Staff share your aspirations and there is a strong sense of the staff working in collaboration for continual improvement.

During my visit, I looked at the progress the school had made since the previous inspection. You have made good progress, demonstrating leaders' ability to improve the school further. The school's policy of providing immediate feedback to pupils within activities is effective. Pupils' understanding is reinforced, and misconceptions are quickly addressed. The vast majority of teachers have strong subject knowledge and clearly explain activities and their expectations. They are effective in the way they ask just the right questions to support pupils' individual understanding and draw out their learning. Pupils respond extremely well, noticeably enjoying their learning and the opportunities they have to try out and apply their understanding and skills. The development of subject leaders has been effective. They have grown in knowledge, skills and responsibility. Their enhanced role in monitoring teaching, learning and the progress of pupils in their subjects ensures that they make a valuable contribution to the development of their subject areas and school improvement overall.

Governors are committed to the school. They form an enthusiastic team and want to make a difference. They are rightly proud of the ethos and sense of community that have been created and see these as strengths. They are beginning to use the expertise within the governing body to benefit the school. However, although they are provided with good-quality information about the school by the headteacher, governors are not using this information sufficiently to challenge leaders confidently and thus make a valuable contribution to the school's improvement journey.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and the staff team have ensured that pupils are safe and secure by promoting the clear message that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Detailed safeguarding records are kept rigorously and regularly reviewed to ensure that they meet statutory requirements. Staff and governors undertake appropriate, frequent and up-to-date training. This includes training related to keeping pupils safe from radicalisation and extremism. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Your vigilance and that of the leadership team regarding the care, support and advocacy of vulnerable pupils are a strength. Leaders have effective relationships with external agencies and are effective in contributing to the safeguarding of vulnerable pupils.

Pupils say that they feel very safe and well cared for in the school. They feel confident that adults will help them if needed. Pupils of all ages talk with knowledge about the ways they can stay safe in a range of situations, including personally and online. The very large majority of parents feel that you and the staff keep children safe and well looked after.

Inspection findings

- One of the areas I explored with you was a dip in the attainment of pupils at the end of key stage 2 in mathematics. Your analysis of these outcomes has been comprehensive. Apart from specific cohort issues, you also identified that pupils throughout the school were not as good as they could be at thinking more deeply

about their mathematical learning. Overall, they struggle to apply their mathematical knowledge effectively. You have implemented a mathematics programme from Year 1 upwards to address these areas systematically and build these skills steadily through the school. It is having a powerful impact on key stage 1 pupils, who are excited to break down the steps they need to solve a mathematical problem and are eager to talk with their peers about how they did this. Key stage 2 pupils are being taught elements of this approach, but some pupils still lack the confidence to apply their mathematical reasoning and particularly struggle to articulate their learning.

- Another area I explored was how well you support the group of disadvantaged pupils to reach their full potential. Your vigilance in tracking their progress is a clear indication of your commitment to ensuring that this group of pupils achieve well. You offer a range of effective support to help those who need it to catch up quickly. You also offer pupils a good range of non-academic support to help pupils grow in resilience and personally and emotionally. You are mindful that the priorities for improvement identified for the whole school will specifically benefit disadvantaged pupils, for example in the emphasis on developing pupils' knowledge and understanding of subject vocabulary. You and your staff team work sensitively to reduce any barriers to learning and address any well-being needs. To this end, you use the pupil premium funding you receive wisely.
- The work you do in subjects other than English and mathematics was another line of enquiry. Your curriculum is developing well. It is led enthusiastically and confidently by your subject leaders, who are passionate about their subjects. You have developed a well-thought-out and comprehensive curriculum that provides opportunities for subject leaders to develop their expertise and to develop schemes of learning that explore subjects in more detail. Pupils say that you have been successful in making learning enjoyable and exciting. An effective system for assessing the progress of pupils in each subject has been established. You and your staff team are looking forward to developing the curriculum further. You intend to look at how to develop depth in learning and how to show progression over time effectively. Also, you intend to further explore how subjects can interact together to grow pupils' knowledge and understanding of concepts.
- A fourth line of enquiry was to explore the variability in the number of pupils who are persistently absent from school. Attendance is a high priority for the school, and absence is currently below the national average. You are aware that overall persistent absence remains just above the national averages and are doing all you can to address this. You have thorough systems for monitoring attendance and keep a close eye on those pupils who are not attending school regularly. Your increased focus on these pupils has resulted in some notable successes, and in particular, a reduction in the number of pupils who are absent due to extended holidays in term time.
- Finally, we agreed to identify some of the other strengths of the school. At the previous inspection, early years practice and provision were identified as outstanding. This area of the school remains strong. Children benefit from a bright, cheerful learning environment. Experienced, knowledgeable staff get the best out of children to ensure that they get off to an excellent start in their educational career. The teaching of phonics is also a strength. Pupils are keen

and enjoy their learning. Adults are adept and have a high level of subject knowledge. This is evident in the consistently high proportion of pupils that meet the phonics standard at the end of Year 1. The school has been identified as a model school for a recognised national reading scheme, which is a further indication of strong practice.

- Another strength is the pastoral support for pupils. Adults know pupils extremely well and are very attentive to their emotional well-being. Your school values are integral to this and are the guiding principles by which you support and develop the growth of emotional and personal development. Values such as 'respect, trust, compassion and resilience' are evident throughout the school. In lessons and around school, adults and children take every opportunity to reinforce their school values and to give them an everyday meaning. For example, pupils talked with conviction about the importance of friendship, kindness and caring. They found it easy to give examples of this, such as welcoming and befriending a new pupil or helping someone in the playground if they fall over.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to develop teaching and learning in mathematics, particularly in key stage 2, so that pupils achieve all that they are capable of
- governors increase their knowledge and understanding of the school's priorities, so that they can effectively challenge leaders.

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

Yours sincerely

Sue Eastwood
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you, the deputy headteacher and the curriculum leads for English and mathematics. I also met with the person responsible for maintaining safeguarding records. I met with four members of the governing body, including the chair. I spoke on the telephone with a representative of the local authority. I visited lessons and scrutinised pupils' work.

I took account of the views of parents who talked with me before the school day and of 49 responses from parents to Ofsted's questionnaire, Parent View. I also took account of the 11 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and spoke with

staff during the day. I met a group of pupils to talk about school life and took account of responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire. I observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school.

I looked at school documents, including: information about pupils' achievement; the school's self-evaluation; the school improvement plan; information related to the work of the management committee; and records relating to safeguarding.