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Mrs Katharine Hall
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Hall

Short inspection of Marshside Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 22 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 2015.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

Since the previous inspection, there have been many changes at the school. Four members of the teaching staff have left the school. Four new members of staff have been appointed, including three newly qualified teachers. The new teachers have settled in quickly. They told me that they have been extremely well supported by school leaders and that they have had access to good professional development.

Over the past two years, there have also been major changes to the governing body. Governors bring a wealth of expertise and experience to their roles. They have quickly developed a good understanding of the school's strengths and the areas that need further improvement. Governors are not complacent. They are keen to improve their effectiveness in supporting and challenging school leaders. They share your vision for the school to provide the best possible education for all pupils.

The pupils I spoke with told me that they enjoy school. They said that pupils are friendly and that behaviour is almost always good at the school. They particularly like the wide range of sporting activities and clubs that are available to them. Most parents and carers are supportive of the school's leadership team. One parent summed up the views of many when she described Marshside as 'a friendly and caring school in the heart of the community'.

At the previous inspection, school leaders were asked to improve teaching by ensuring

that there was greater challenge in lessons. You have had some success in addressing this issue. Improvements to the quality of teaching were reflected in pupils' attainment at the end of key stage 2 in 2018. The proportions of pupils achieving the expected levels in reading, writing and mathematics were above the national averages. You were also asked to strengthen the role of subject leaders and provide more opportunities for pupils to improve their reading, writing and mathematics when they work in other subjects. I found less evidence of progress here. Improving subject leadership and the quality of the wider curriculum remains a challenge for the school.

Safeguarding is effective.

The school's policies and procedures for keeping pupils safe are well organised and effective. Leaders ensure that appropriate checks are made on all adults who work with pupils at the school. Record-keeping is of a good quality and any concerns are logged promptly and followed up appropriately. School leaders work well with a range of outside agencies to support pupils and make sure that they are kept safe.

Pupils are safe and well looked after in school. They are well informed about the things they can do to keep themselves safe and they know who to turn to if they have any concerns. Pupils say that bullying is rare and that, if it occurs, it is dealt with effectively.

Staff and governors fully understand their safeguarding responsibilities. Staff know what to do if they have any concerns about a pupil's welfare. Staff and governors are well trained in safeguarding matters. Leaders ensure that everybody who comes into contact with pupils in school receives appropriate training and is kept updated on procedures and potential safeguarding risks.

Inspection findings

- The first line of enquiry that I explored was to establish how well reading is taught, particularly in the early years and key stage 1. I found several strengths. The teaching of phonics is effective. Children in the early years develop a good understanding of letters and the sounds that they make. I saw children in the Reception class using their knowledge of phonics to successfully read words that they had not seen before. Those who struggle with their early reading are given good support. Leaders monitor pupils' progress closely, and effective teaching ensures that gaps in pupils' learning are quickly closed. During this inspection, I met with pupils in Years 2 and 3 who had not managed to pass the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1. These pupils had made strong progress, gained confidence and become competent readers. I also listened to pupils of mixed ability from Year 6. These pupils read fluently and with intonation. They had a good knowledge of children's literature and read regularly at school and at home.
- My second line of enquiry was about the quality of pupils' learning in subjects other than English and mathematics. Pupils study a broad range of subjects at Marshside. However, I found little evidence of strong learning in the wider curriculum. Teachers do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills in subjects such as geography and history. I also saw several examples of

teachers not challenging misconceptions in science. Middle leaders carry out regular checks on the quality of work in the wider curriculum but have not taken action quickly enough when they have identified weaknesses.

- My final line of enquiry related to pupils' attendance. Over the past two years, attendance has been below the national average. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent from school has been above average during this period. The school has made good progress in improving attendance. School leaders have stressed the importance of good attendance with pupils and parents. Leaders have worked effectively with the families of those pupils whose attendance was giving significant cause for concern. As a result of this work, the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent from school has fallen. Overall attendance has improved and is now close to the national average.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- prompt action is taken to address weaknesses that are found in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment
- teachers provide more opportunities for pupils to practise and apply their writing skills in subjects across the curriculum.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Sefton. 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 and the deputy headteacher. I also met with five governors and a representative of the local authority. I observed the teaching of phonics in the early years and Year 1. I also listened to several pupils read. I visited all classrooms with you to observe teaching and learning. I looked at the quality of work in pupils' books and evaluated the school's improvement plan. I also scrutinised other key documentation, some of which related to safeguarding. I met with the subject leader for English. I met with members of staff to discuss their views of the school. I took account of the 39 responses to Parent View – Ofsted's online questionnaire – and the two responses to the staff survey.