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12 April 2019

Mr Simon Thompson
Principal
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Dear Mr Thompson

Short inspection of Pendle Primary Academy

Following my visit to the school on 26 March 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.

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 be a section 5 inspection.

Since taking up your post as principal in January 2016, you have gained the respect and trust of your highly committed staff team. You and your staff have a steely determination to ensure that pupils reach their full potential, both in their personal development and academic achievement.

You, senior leaders, governors and the trust reflect carefully on the school's performance and have an accurate view of its strengths and priorities. For example, governors told me some of the ways in which teachers plan activities that motivate pupils to develop their reading and writing skills. The school improvement plan includes precise actions such as prioritising pupils' emotional resilience for learning and raising pupils' achievement in reading.

At the previous inspection in 2015, inspectors asked the leadership team, including governors, to raise achievement, so that by the end of Reception significantly more children attain a good level of development. In early years it was clear to see how happy children are to come to school and how they quickly settle down to one of

the many activity areas that staff organise. For the vast majority, English is an additional language and most join the Reception class at a very early stage of learning to speak English. As a result, their communication and language skills are very weak. So too are children's personal and social development. However, the staff team in early years goes the extra mile to build children's skills in all areas of learning. At the time of the last inspection less than a fifth reached a good level of development. In the last two years this has increased to half of the children reaching a good level of development by the end of Reception. Although this remains lower than the national average, it demonstrates at least good progress from very low starting points. Current pupils in early years continue to do well due to the good quality of provision and strong leadership in this area.

Inspectors also asked that by the end of Year 2 pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics should be at least in line with the national average and any variation in attainment between groups reduced. You and your staff have risen to this challenge and in 2018 the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics was in line with the national average. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standards was higher than the national average in all core subjects. Current pupils in key stage 1 are achieving very well in relation to their low starting points when they joined the school.

You were also asked to raise achievement in mathematics in key stage 2. From scrutinising pupils' books, it is clear that a whole-school approach to mathematics has been adopted. It is evident that teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Teachers plan activities so that groups and individuals are appropriately challenged and no time is wasted. Teachers provide ample opportunities for real-life problem-solving which brings learning to life for pupils. As with writing, progress across key stage 2 has been well above the national average for the last two years. For the last two years, attainment in both mathematics and writing has been above the national average. The proportion of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, reaching higher standards in mathematics was significantly above the national average in 2018. Current pupils are progressing equally well.

Pupils really enjoy coming to school and love learning. They told me how much they enjoy learning through trips to places like the beach at Lytham St Anne's and the port in Liverpool. Parents and carers commented on how their children 'wake up happy and ready to come to school'. Another parent went on to say how the school 'has made huge progress over the last couple of years', which is clearly the case. Almost all parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, would recommend this school.

Safeguarding is effective.

The designated safeguarding leader, together with you and four other deputy safeguarding leaders, ensures that all safeguarding arrangements meet requirements. You make sure that staff fully understand their duty and follow systems and procedures for logging concerns. You ensure that all necessary checks are made on the suitability of staff to work with children. When I arrived at the start

of the inspection the effectiveness of procedures to check on those visiting school was evident.

You make sure that the promotion of safeguarding throughout the school has a high profile. You provide staff with regular up-to-date training so that they, and members of the governing body, understand the current guidance. You are prompt in making referrals to the local authority. You work well with a range of external agencies to secure expert support for pupils' welfare, as and when necessary. You and your staff provide exceptional care and support for pupils and their families.

Inspection findings

- As part of this inspection I explored the way that reading is taught across the school. Children begin to develop a love of books, stories and rhymes, which many have not been exposed to before starting in the Reception class. Each day, story time develops children's listening skills and helps to build their vocabulary. Children are currently enjoying exploring fairy tales, which teachers skilfully link to other areas of learning. For example, children recently carried out an experiment to make their own magic potion. Teachers encouraged the children to describe how they added vinegar to washing-up liquid and then stirred in bicarbonate of soda and glitter to make their own magic potion. Children were then able to use their phonic knowledge to write simple sentences about the order in which they mixed the ingredients. Staff use a raft of experiences from which children can develop their speech and language. A recent visit to a farm, linked to their topic on spring and growth, helped children to understand where food comes from. Again, this type of visit helps children to talk about their experiences and develop sentence structures and vocabulary. Every Friday morning, parents are encouraged to stay and read with their children to highlight the importance of reading together as a family.
- Across early years and key stage 1, phonics is consistently well taught. Over the last three years the proportion of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, who reach the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check has been higher than the national average. The leader of reading and the leader of oracy ensure that those who fall behind with their reading are given bespoke support. This enables pupils to catch up quickly. Pupils who read to me demonstrated how well they use phonics to work out unfamiliar words. They could also retell what they had read in their own words, showing a good level of understanding.
- You, together with your leaders for reading and oracy, have ensured that teachers have the necessary skills and knowledge to use assessment information accurately to build effectively on what pupils already know. As a result, learning activities closely match the needs and interests of the pupils. Pupils have opportunities to extend their vocabulary through well-crafted challenges during guided reading sessions. Staff skilfully use questions that develop pupils' ideas and refine their skills. Leaders work with Lancashire Adult Learning to ensure that parents are given opportunities to develop their own skills so that they can encourage their children's reading. It is apparent, however, that some pupils do not read regularly beyond school and this hinders their progress.

- I explored how class books are developing pupils' knowledge and skills across a range of subjects. Teachers choose high-quality texts for each class to read and these are the platform on which the broad and balanced curriculum is built. Using these books, teachers ignite pupils' imaginations. Through the class book, pupils are able to develop their interests in subjects such as science, geography, history and the arts. This was evident from the work around 'Goodnight Mister Tom', which Year 6 pupils read last term. Alongside other texts such as Chamberlain's declaration of war and 'The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas', pupils developed their understanding of the impact of war. They discovered what it was like to be an evacuee in Britain and the plight of Jewish people in Germany. High-quality books are now the basis from which all subjects are taught. You have rightly invested in new books for the library and for each classroom for every topic that pupils explore. Pupils have exposure to a wide variety of reading materials, both fiction and non-fiction.
- Finally, I investigated pupils' attendance. You ensure that staff promptly follow up on any absences. You know your families extremely well and staff work to build trust and positive relationships. You work closely with other professionals and outside agencies to ensure that families receive the guidance and support that they need. Pupils understand the importance of attending school every day. As a result, attendance is broadly in line with national figures. However, the number of pupils who are persistently absent is higher than the national average due to unauthorised holidays in term time. The average length of time lost to learning for those who are taken on unauthorised holidays is three weeks: clearly for some it is more than this. This has a detrimental impact on the progress that these pupils make.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to work with parents who need to grow the confidence and skills to help their children develop a love of reading beyond school
- work with families whose children's progress is hampered by too many absences is effective in improving attendance.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Lancashire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Naomi Taylor
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I observed teaching and learning jointly with you. I held meetings with subject leaders, senior leaders, the interim chair and another member of the governing body, the designated safeguarding leader and one of the deputy safeguarding leaders. I also held a meeting with the principal of Nelson and Colne College, who is the former chief executive officer and the executive principal of the multi-academy trust. I analysed the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and I spoke informally with parents at the school gates to seek their views. I also took account of free-text responses from parents. I analysed the staff responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire and I spoke to several staff informally during the day. I held a meeting with pupils and spoke informally with pupils during breaks and in lessons. There were no responses to Ofsted's online pupil questionnaire. During the inspection, I reviewed a range of school documents. These included: the school's development plans and self-evaluation documents; minutes of the governing body meetings; safeguarding documentation; records relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance; the school website; school policies; and pupils' work. I listened to pupils reading and analysed their reading logs.