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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mr Paul McVeigh
Headteacher
Holywell Green Primary School
Stainland Road
Holywell Green
Halifax
West Yorkshire
HX4 9AE

Dear Mr McVeigh

Short inspection of Holywell Green Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 2 July 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 second short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in June 2011.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. There have been some changes to staffing since then. You have appointed a new deputy headteacher and together you have made plans to continue to improve the school. You have also appointed some new teachers and a pastoral support worker.

Pupils behave well around school. They are polite and courteous to staff and to visitors. They listen carefully to teachers in lessons and follow instructions. They play well together on the playground. Most of the pupils who responded to Ofsted's survey agreed that pupils' behaviour around the school and in lessons is good.

Parents are generally very supportive of the school and say that their children learn well and make good progress. There are, however, a small group of parents who feel that their views are not listened to. The school would benefit from improving the way you all work with parents and take account of their views.

Governors bring a range of skills and expertise to the governing body. They make regular visits to the school and, as a result, they know the school well. Some of the governors are new to the role and are developing the level of challenge that they offer you and other leaders. For example, one governor made visits to school to see how well leaders' actions in the early years were being implemented.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You have made sure that all the necessary checks on staff and volunteers are completed and updated. You provide regular training for staff throughout the year. As a result, pupils say that they feel safe in school.

You and your safeguarding team work together and meet regularly to review the success of arrangements for pupils who need additional support. You have further improved this team by appointing a pastoral support worker. This means that extra support for pupils can be put in place immediately if any concerns arise. You told me how pupils can approach her directly by posting a note in the letterbox or by using the 'red button' on the school's website. Parents value the guidance from the pastoral support worker and view her as 'an invaluable new addition to the school', appreciating the help their children have received.

Attendance is a strength of the school. It has been consistently better than national averages over the past three years and very few pupils are persistently absent from school.

Inspection findings

- One of the areas I was interested in looking at during this inspection was how effectively leaders and governors use the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils. At the last inspection you were asked to sharpen the way you measure the impact of this funding to ensure that pupils get the best value. There have been some improvements in the achievement of this group of pupils, particularly in mathematics and in reading at key stage 2. However, these pupils are making less progress than pupils nationally in writing.
- We discussed in depth the way you spend this additional funding. You showed me how you target the funding in different areas according to pupils' individual needs. As a result, there have been some further improvements. At the end of Year 1 in 2018 only half of the disadvantaged group met the expected standard in the phonics screening check but this year nearly all disadvantaged pupils were successful. You could also show me how these pupils are catching up and this is an area of the school's work that you are keen to improve on even further.
- Another area I was keen to look at was how well early reading was taught. Published information shows that over the last three years, lower-than-average proportions of children achieved a good level of development at the end of the early years foundation stage. And, over the same three years, lower-than-average proportions met the expected standard in the phonics screening check. These groups are doing less well than those nationally.
- Teachers plan and teach phonics lessons daily. Lessons have a clear focus and pupils are provided with opportunities to apply what they have learned in their own writing. Sometimes, progress is slow as pupils are not all provided with the

right level of challenge. Also, there are occasions when staff do not use the letter names to help pupils to spell or say the letter sounds correctly. Pupils are provided with a range of books and texts and can talk about all the different 'under the sea' books that they have been reading. However, the books that pupils are given to read by themselves do not always match their reading ability. Some pupils, particularly lower-ability pupils, are unable to recognise the sounds within the words. This hinders their ability to read and understand what they have read.

- Finally, I wanted to look at the school's curriculum and how it meets the needs of pupils. Information on the school's website shows that the school's curriculum is planned in topics and covers a range of subject areas. I was interested to see how you and other leaders change this curriculum to meet the needs and interests of your pupils so that they are prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Middle leaders showed me pupils' books and could tell me how pupils learn well in different subjects. I could see that pupils have opportunities to write at length across different subject areas and they produce good-quality writing. For example, in Year 6 pupils wrote in the style of estate agents to advertise Viking houses. Pupils' art work is celebrated and eye-catchingly displayed all around the school: I saw lots of examples of creative work, such as the tin can robots. You told me that you have begun to review the school's curriculum. For example, you recently held a rainbow day where pupils celebrated diversity. This is something that you should continue to develop and enhance so that pupils gain a deeper understanding of current themes as well as other faiths and cultures.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they refine and implement the plans to improve and modernise the school's curriculum so that pupils have a broader understanding of life in modern Britain
- additional funding is targeted effectively to enable disadvantaged pupils to make similar progress in writing to that of pupils nationally
- staff are provided with training in teaching phonics to ensure a consistent approach
- pupils, particularly lower-ability pupils, are given books to read which match their phonics skills more closely.

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

Yours sincerely

Eleanore Pickard
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and other senior leaders. I also met with members of the governing body, key stage leaders and the designated safeguarding team. I spoke on the telephone with a representative from the local authority. I talked to pupils and listened to some of them read. We spent time in classes together.

There were 27 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and 22 free-text comments. I also spoke with parents informally at the start of the school day.

I viewed a range of documents, including leaders' evaluation of the school's current performance and plans for further improvement, as well as documents associated with safeguarding. I also looked at the school's website.