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Mrs Joanna Conway  
Interim headteacher  
Whitegate End Primary and Nursery School  
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Dear Mrs Conway

### **Short inspection of Whitegate End Primary and Nursery School**

Following my visit to the school on 9 March 2016, 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 April 2011.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

You have wasted no time since being appointed interim headteacher in January. You have already won the trust and support of staff, parents and pupils. Pupils say they enjoy coming to school and are excited about learning. Parents appreciate that you are taking the time to get to know them by 'manning the gate' at the beginning and end of every school day. Staff applaud the changes you have put in place which help them to do their jobs more efficiently.

You have been ably supported over the last few weeks by the deputy headteacher. Together you have built on the firm foundations which are the legacy of the previous headteacher. You and your team are united in your focus on improving teaching and learning across school. You are deploying your experienced practitioners to good effect, supporting teaching staff across school in your drive to ensure that all teaching is consistently of the highest standard. As a result, teachers in the early stages of their careers are rapidly honing their skills, while your long-standing staff welcome the 'breath of fresh air' the new staff have brought to the school.

Your governors share your ambition for the school. They have steered the school effectively through a period of change, recruiting new staff with the skills and experience

to drive the school forward. They have made sure that they now keep a closer eye on the school so that they can better support you as you take up the reins at Whitegate End.

The previous inspection identified a few areas for the school to work on to accelerate pupils' progress in the early years, as well as raise attainment and improve provision in reading and writing in Key Stage 1. Since that inspection, leaders have made improvements to both the indoor and outdoor provision in early years, sharpened assessment procedures and provided further training for staff. As a result, outcomes for your youngest children have improved and, for the past three years, have been above the national average.

Your deputy headteacher, who leads on English, has prioritised staff training to secure consistently high-quality provision for reading and writing. The daily sessions in phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) and guided reading, coupled with weekly comprehension practice, ensure that pupils secure their basic reading skills. This is reflected in the high numbers of pupils who meet the expected standard in the phonics screening check in Year 1, as well as the proportions of pupils who meet age-related expectations at the end of Key Stage 1. Pupils' books are testament to the wealth of opportunities they have to practise their writing across the curriculum and the use of high-quality texts to inspire them. There is now a systematic approach to the teaching of writing, and teachers constantly assess pupils' strengths and weaknesses across different types of writing. This provision helps your pupils to make good progress in writing across Key Stage 1. However, you are not complacent, continuing to look at how you can further drive up standards.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You have raised everyone's awareness of the importance of keeping pupils safe since you took up your post. You have ensured that all staff know their roles and responsibilities, and their training is up to date. Your business manager has further strengthened your procedures for checking the suitability of staff and volunteers working with children. Staff are meticulous in using the online reporting systems to record any incidents of poor behaviour. You and the learning mentor analyse the data, identifying any emerging patterns and trends. As a result, pupils report that incidents of poor behaviour, including bullying, are very rare since any issues are 'nipped in the bud'. You encourage pupils to take responsibility for their own safety. In every class pupils complete daily checks to ensure that everything is in place to keep them and their classmates safe: for example, making sure that gates have been locked once all pupils have arrived. You and the learning mentor are thorough in following up on any safeguarding concerns, liaising closely with external agencies.

### **Inspection findings**

- You were appointed interim headteacher in January 2016. Together with the deputy headteacher, who joined the school in April 2015, you have used the information provided by your predecessor, as well as your own findings, to develop a credible plan which contains the appropriate priorities for further improvement. In the short time you have been headteacher you have recognised the expertise of teachers in school, using their skills well to enhance the quality of teaching,

particularly in English and mathematics.

- You have correctly identified the need to replace the existing system of checking pupils' attainment and progress with one which provides useful information for all staff, whether class teachers, middle or senior leaders. You sought the views of teaching staff and governors to help you decide on the best system to meet the needs of your school. While this is being installed you have modified the existing systems to provide you and your colleagues with key information about every pupil's progress.
- The early years provision is further improving following the appointment of an experienced middle leader in September 2015. Children settle in quickly, responding well to the carefully considered routines and clear expectations. Adults encourage children's learning through incisive questioning and stimulating activities that help children to practise their early reading, writing and mathematical skills.
- Everyone is clear that the number one priority is improving teaching and learning. Staff are enthusiastic about the positive impact that the support from the recently appointed lead practitioner is already having on their practice. Pupils are enjoying the increased access to practical activities to help them develop their mathematical skills. They are enjoying the challenge of more complex problem solving and this is deepening their understanding: for example, during the inspection Year 2 pupils were investigating whether they could make a cuboid using 12 straws.
- Teachers assess pupils' understanding on a daily basis, using this information to inform their planning for the next lesson. As a result, pupils are enjoying their reading, writing and mathematics lessons. Their books and school data provide evidence that they are making stronger progress in English and mathematics across the school than at the time of the last inspection.
- Pupils talk enthusiastically about their learning. They enjoy the wealth of interesting topics which they study. Teachers ensure that there are plenty of opportunities for pupils to practise their basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics as they are studying other subjects. Pupils relish the innovative approaches your teachers take to hook them into their learning; for example, Year 6 were excited about using their mathematical knowledge to help the local police officer solve clues to the 'crime' committed in their classroom on 'World Maths Day'.
- As we discussed, you have already made some improvements to the organisation of teaching and learning, such as revising the timetable. These have been well received by teachers. You have noticed that, while your pupils are enthused by their learning, there are missed opportunities for pupils to have a role in planning their learning in subjects such as science, geography and history. You want them to be able to tell their teachers what they already know and what they would be interested to find out, so that even better use is made of lesson time.
- You have quite rightly identified the need to develop the role of middle leaders so that teaching across all subjects is of a consistently high standard and pupils develop their skills, deepen their understanding and broaden their knowledge across all areas. Your mathematics and English leaders provide excellent role models for strong subject leadership. You know that the new assessment tracking procedures you are introducing will prove an essential tool for your middle leaders to audit their subject so that they accurately target areas for improvement.

- Pupils are making good progress across school. Teachers assess pupils' knowledge prior to starting a new topic and use this information well to plan. The daily checks on pupils' learning are used effectively for teachers to know what they need to teach next. Teachers use additional adults well to make sure that they can best meet the needs of all pupils. Teachers gather a wealth of information to inform their regular assessments. You manage this information well to hold teachers to account for the progress of their pupils as well as to swiftly identify any pupil at risk of falling behind so that you can put additional support in place.
- The governing body has recently been reconstituted and the number of governors reduced. They have reorganised roles and responsibilities to make business more manageable and ensure greater involvement by each member. They have made sure that they have a better understanding of the different aspects of the school's performance using a range of sources of information. Governors are highly ambitious for the school and make sure that they give careful consideration to key decisions. They are not prepared to compromise their high expectations when recruiting new staff, taking time to find the right people. Governors recognise there is still more work to be done if they are to be the outstanding governing body they aspire to be.
- Your school is an exciting place to learn. On the day of my visit, two classes were taking part in a local choral speaking competition and another completing a cycling course. Pupils told me about the regular 'Whole School Days' including 'World Faith Day,' 'World Maths Day' and 'World Book Day'. They particularly enjoyed 'Takeover Day' when pupils took on the adults' jobs in school, including that of the headteacher.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- middle leaders are routinely involved in evaluating the school's effectiveness, undertaking regular monitoring activities and sharing their findings, and that they use this information well to strengthen teaching and learning in their subject areas
- governors continue to improve their understanding of the school, making sure they are kept well informed with reports from leaders, regular visits to school and looking carefully at information about pupils' progress so that they can provide effective support and challenge to keep driving the school forward.

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 Metropolitan Borough Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Pippa Jackson Maitland  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I spoke to you, members of the governing body, a group of six staff and a group of six pupils. I also talked to a representative from the local authority and the school effectiveness partner. Together, we made short visits to lessons, during which I spoke to pupils and looked at the quality of their work. I spoke to a number of parents at the end of the school day. I also considered the views of 12 pupils, 63 parents and 22 staff who completed online questionnaires. I reviewed your self-evaluation, as well as a range of other documentation. I also checked the effectiveness of your safeguarding arrangements and recruitment information.