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Mrs Dawn Hurst
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Hurst

Short inspection of Leigh Central Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 14 February 2017, 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 June 2012.

This school continues to be good.

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

You and your senior leadership team have created a culture where all staff genuinely care for their pupils, and for each other. You have created a family ethos in the school which sits alongside a culture of high expectations. Following your appointment soon after the last inspection, you wasted no time in taking action to address the areas for improvement identified in the report. Consequently, the school is now in an even stronger position than when it was last judged to be good.

This is a truly inclusive school where every pupil is valued. Disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils, who make up a significant proportion of the school, are supported very effectively. Staff nurture pupils and help them to thrive and achieve. Along with senior leaders and governors, you are relentless in your pursuit of further improvement. To this end, you are very outward-looking and creative in finding ways to ensure that pupils in your school are able to fulfil their potential. Central to your success is a focus on the impact of the actions that you take. You strike the right balance between providing strategic leadership for the school and making sure that you know your pupils well in order to meet their needs and help them to flourish. You are ably supported in this role by a very strong team of senior leaders.

Staff speak very highly of your leadership. Responses to the online questionnaire were unanimously positive. Their comments focused on how valued they feel and

how leaders support them to carry out their roles effectively. They feel very much part of a team. One comment summed up the ethos of the school: 'This is a very happy school where staff are positive about doing their best for the pupils and their families.'

This view is echoed by parents whose opinions about the school are also very positive. The time you have invested in ensuring that there are positive relationships between staff and parents has paid dividends. You have created a very welcoming environment where all staff are approachable. Parents value the support that staff give to their children and families. They particularly like the way that leaders are outside of the school gates at the beginning and end of every day to greet them and ensure their children's safety. Their positive views can be summed up by one parent's comments: 'This is a friendly, warm, safe and welcoming school which all my children love attending.'

Pupils really enjoy coming to school. They are enthusiastic about their learning and value the support that they receive from teachers and other adults. Pupils across the school say that mathematics is one of their favourite subjects. This reflects the high priority that has been given to improving teaching and learning in this subject over the last few years. The impact of this can be seen in the improved progress that pupils make and the standards that they achieve. Pupils like it when teachers give them challenging work to do and this happens routinely across the school.

Having two Reception classes last year presented you with some challenges, not least in relation to creating an appropriate learning environment for the children. You have ensured that pupils in both these classes this year are benefiting from high-quality provision. Consequently, pupils are making good progress towards achieving at least the expected standard at the end of Year 2. You have identified the importance of high-quality provision for pupils from the moment that they start in the early years. You are focusing particularly on accelerating the progress of those with low starting points to ensure that they reach a good level of development before they start key stage 1. Pupils benefit from consistently high-quality teaching of phonics. Over recent years the proportion of children who have met the standard in the phonics screening check has been broadly in line with the national average.

One of your first priorities when you became headteacher was to create a rigorous system for monitoring teaching and learning. You have done this successfully. The robust and comprehensive monitoring system now in place comprises lesson observations, learning walks, scrutiny of books, pupil interviews and analysis of assessment information. Consequently, you have an accurate picture of the quality of teaching in all classes. You are confident in your assertion that pupils throughout the school are benefiting from typically good teaching. Your senior leaders are outstanding practitioners who work on a daily basis alongside classroom teachers. Through modelling this outstanding practice and providing personalised support and training, they ensure that the quality of teaching across the school is improving further.

The systems that you have introduced to track pupils' progress in English and mathematics are strong. During the inspection we agreed that the tracking of pupils' progress and achievement across the wider curriculum is not as effective. Improving this would ensure that pupils and their parents are better informed about how much progress they are making in other subjects, such as history, geography and science.

Pupils at Leigh Central Primary feel safe, valued and happy, which helps them to learn more effectively. It is therefore a shame that some pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, are missing out on this experience by not attending school regularly. Alongside senior leaders, governors and all staff in school, you are working tirelessly to improve the overall attendance rate and reduce the number of pupils who are persistently absent. You are aware that this remains your biggest challenge.

Safeguarding is effective.

You ensure that there is a strong culture of safeguarding in your school. You believe that 'Staff go above and beyond what they are required to do to keep our children safe.' The highly experienced pastoral manager works closely and effectively with families and external agencies to ensure the safety and welfare of all your pupils.

All safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose, including protocols and practices for record-keeping. Procedures to ensure that all staff receive relevant training are robust.

You and your staff know your pupils extremely well. This, coupled with the high-quality training that staff receive, means that they are well placed to spot any signs or symptoms of potential risk or abuse. You make it a priority that your pupils gain an age-appropriate understanding of potential dangers, including how to stay safe online.

Inspection findings

- You and your team provide strong leadership which has enabled the school to make significant improvements since the last inspection. Each member of the senior leadership team has clearly a defined role but you all work collaboratively to drive improvements further. This strong leadership team was able to demonstrate how it has addressed the areas that I was focusing on during this inspection.
- Pupils throughout the school benefit from the outstanding teaching of senior leaders who work with identified groups to ensure that they are making the best possible progress. This has particularly benefited those pupils who enter key stage 1 with low prior attainment. Since the last inspection, pupils have made better progress throughout their time in key stage 1, enabling them to achieve higher standards. You understand how important it is that pupils reach a good level of development before they start key stage 1. To this end, you are taking action to ensure that children benefit from high-quality provision from the beginning of the early years.

- Strong leadership of mathematics means that this subject is very high profile across the school. Pupils of all ages talk about mathematics using the same language. This consistent approach is having a positive impact on pupils' confidence and enjoyment of mathematics. External training and the ongoing support from the deputy headteacher ensure that there is high-quality teaching in mathematics in all year groups. There is a particular focus on developing pupils' fluency and reasoning skills and the impact of this work can be seen in their books. Leaders also explained that there is now a bigger focus on ensuring that the most able are challenged. Evidence of this was also seen in pupils' books. Ensuring that pupils are challenged to reach the highest standards is also a focus in English. Evidence of this was seen in the work Year 6 were doing on writing letters of complaint.
- Clear and rigorous procedures for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning have been introduced since the last inspection. You presented a range of detailed evidence to support your assertion that teaching is now consistently good across the school. Other evidence gathered throughout the inspection certainly supports this. Senior leaders have an accurate understanding of the strengths and areas for development of all staff. They work in a supportive way with staff to help them to hone their classroom practice. Teachers who are newly and recently qualified particularly value this support. As one of them said: 'Senior leaders go out of their way to help. They couldn't be more supportive.'
- The one key line of enquiry in this inspection that remains a cause for concern for leaders and governors is attendance, particularly the number of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities who do not attend school regularly. Despite the extensive range of strategies that you have employed, including rewards and sanctions, absence figures remain above national averages. However, it is important to note that a third of the pupils who are persistently absent have serious medical conditions that necessitate them spending periods of time in hospital. I am convinced that you will not waver from your determination both to support these pupils and to do everything that you can to encourage others to attend school regularly.
- You have rightly focused on ensuring that the tracking of pupils' progress in English and mathematics is rigorous and used to identify where pupils may be falling behind. The tracking of pupils' progress in other subjects is not as rigorous. Consequently, pupils and their parents are not as clear about the progress they are making across the wider curriculum.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to take action to improve attendance, particularly of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities
- children benefit from high-quality provision from the moment that they begin the early years, particularly those who have low starting points, in order to reach a good level of development at the end of the Reception Year

- they strengthen the system for tracking pupils' progress and assessing their achievement in subjects other than English and mathematics.

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

Yours sincerely

Anne Seneviratne
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and your senior leadership team, the pastoral manager, the attendance mentor, the business manager, a group of newly and recently qualified teachers, the chair and vice-chair of the governing body, and a representative of the local authority. I met formally with two groups of pupils from across the school and talked informally with others at playtime and in lessons. I listened to pupils read. I also talked with parents informally at the start of the school day. Accompanied by senior leaders, I observed teaching and learning in key stages 1 and 2 and the early years. I examined a range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding, minutes of the governing body meetings, attendance information, and pupils' assessment information. I also undertook a review of the school's website. As part of the inspection, I considered the 15 responses to Ofsted's Parent View, the eight responses from parents to Ofsted's freetext, and the 22 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.