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Miss Vivien Birchall
Headteacher
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Dear Miss Birchall

Short inspection of Newton Westpark Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 9 January 2018, 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 May 2014.

This school continues to be good.

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

You are highly committed to providing the best for your pupils, many of whom come to your school with a range of needs. You work hard to successfully create a warm and caring atmosphere. You take pains to ensure that the school environment is well kept and inviting. You have drawn up an action plan for improving the school's performance. This correctly identifies the areas that need development. These include increasing the proportion of children achieving a good level of development at the end of the Reception Year and encouraging better attendance. However, you acknowledge that you need to be clearer about how you will measure whether your actions have had an impact on pupils' achievement.

You have successfully addressed most of the areas for improvement that were identified in the last inspection report.

The quality of teaching has improved and all pupils make good or better progress. In English and mathematics, the proportion of pupils who now reach the expected standard or better in Year 2 and Year 6 is typically close to or above the national average.

Pupils' basic literacy skills have improved considerably and your new handwriting scheme ensures a more consistently neat style. Pupils' understanding of English grammar, punctuation and spelling by the end of Year 6 is strong. In 2017, nearly

three quarters of pupils achieved the higher standard in the test at the end of key stage 2.

You have developed successful strategies to bring about these improvements. These include, for instance, organising exciting visits to support pupils' learning and the provision of an 'immersion room', where pupils are surrounded by images that stimulate ideas to help them improve their writing. You have also introduced new approaches to teaching mathematics, using new resources to support pupils' learning and providing more opportunities for pupils to solve problems and use their reasoning skills.

Subject leaders now carry out more checks on the quality of teaching and learning. They devise plans that have appropriate targets and actions for developing their subject. However, you accept that they do not include a precise enough explanation of the intended impact of their actions on pupils' achievement.

I spoke with a small group of parents and carers who were highly supportive of the work of the school. Almost all parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, were very positive about the school. They are pleased with the progress of their children and say that staff are caring and easy to approach.

My discussion with staff who are not senior leaders indicates that they are very positive about the school. They appreciate the training that you provide for them and feel that it improves their performance. For example, they enjoy the programme of developmental work they do in groups of three, known as 'triads', which enables them to improve their teaching methods by observing each other in turn and feeding back strengths and areas to improve.

The consortium working on behalf of the local authority to provide support for the school carries out its role effectively. Advisers have a 'light-touch' involvement with the school and know the school's strengths and priorities well.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. In your role as designated safeguarding lead, you make prompt referrals when necessary to appropriate agencies, such as children's services. The school's record of required checks on members of staff is complete and complies with government guidance.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Your staff have warm relationships with pupils and know them well. They also have a secure understanding of safeguarding processes because they have undertaken effective training. They know how to recognise signs of abuse. Pupils feel safe in the school and know, for example, how to protect themselves from the risks associated with the internet. This is because adults give them the information they need to stay safe.

Most of the actions you have taken to improve pupils' attendance at school have been effective, especially for those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities and those who are disadvantaged. Recent actions include the appointment of a pastoral manager. Part of her role is to work with parents of pupils with lower attendance to encourage them to make sure that their child is in school regularly. As a result, you have reduced persistent absence among the groups mentioned above so that it is no longer in the top 10 percent nationally. You recognise, however, that you need to persist with your recent strategies to continue to reduce non-persistent absence among these groups.

Inspection findings

- When I arrived at school at the start of my visit, we agreed a number of key lines of enquiry for the inspection. I have already written about how successfully you have addressed the areas for improvement that inspectors identified at the last inspection. I have also written about the effectiveness of safeguarding in the school.
- Another key line of enquiry concerned the progress of children in the early years. From starting points that are below typical for their age and stage of development, children make good progress. You have overcome the instability caused by staff illness last year and have recently appointed an assistant headteacher to lead the early years. You have a new focus on further increasing the proportion of children who achieve a good level of development. The new early years lead has quickly introduced new strategies, such as more focused teaching of mathematics skills to children. The school's own assessment information shows that nearly three quarters of children are on track to achieve a good level of development in 2018. Evidence in children's work also shows early signs of stronger progress, with examples of middle-ability children attempting to write simple sentences. You recognise, however, that you need to continue to establish these new strategies to secure the further improvement you intend to achieve.
- My next focus was the effectiveness of the teaching of phonics in Year 2. There had been a dip in the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard by the end of Year 2 in 2016. Although this had improved in 2017, it was still below the national average. This was because some pupils in this year group had education, health and care plans for their SEN and/or disabilities. The evidence indicates that teachers plan lessons well and make sure that pupils use a variety of their senses to help them learn effectively. The current group of pupils in Year 2 make good progress in phonics, with most pupils now learning the required spellings for their year group. Leaders are confident that a large majority are on track to meet the expected standard by the end of the year.
- The next key line of enquiry was about the achievement in reading and writing of the most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged. You rightly recognised that the proportion of these pupils reaching the higher standard or greater depth in reading and writing by the end of Year 6 was below the national average in 2017. You have put strategies in place to address this issue, which are beginning to have a positive effect. These include 'reciprocal reading', which

involves a more detailed approach to teaching particular reading skills to children, depending on their needs. You have also increased the use of different stimuli, such as the 'immersion room' mentioned earlier, to encourage greater depth in writing. There is evidence of greater sophistication in pupils' writing, for example, with most-able pupils in Year 3 creating sentences such as 'Like a rainbow rock, it glitters and shines in the light.' Although current pupils make good progress in reading and writing, you acknowledge that your new strategies need to become more firmly established to ensure that more pupils reach the higher standard in English by the end of Year 6.

- Finally, governors understand their responsibilities well. They have a secure knowledge of the school's strengths and areas for development. They also challenge you and other leaders effectively, asking a range of searching questions to hold you rigorously to account.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- there is a sharper focus on pupils' achievement in the success criteria they include in action plans for improvement
- they establish more firmly their recent strategies to increase the proportion of children achieving a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year
- they embed their recent strategies to ensure that more of the most able pupils reach the higher standards in reading and writing by the end of Year 6
- they persist with their work to reduce pupils' absence, especially that of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and those who are disadvantaged.

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

Mark Quinn
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

With you, I carried out short visits to the early years and all year groups in key stage 1 and key stage 2. I scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation summary, action plans for school improvement, minutes of meetings of the governing body and records connected with the safeguarding of children. I held discussions with you, other members of staff, governors, parents and pupils. I had a discussion with a representative of the consortium working on

behalf of the local authority. I analysed pupils' work and the school's own assessment information. I evaluated 14 responses received through Parent View, Ofsted's online survey. There were no other survey responses.