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Mr Neil Verdin
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Verdin

Short inspection of Pleasant Street Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 6 June 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 July 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained and further improved the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have gained the confidence of the parents, who state that 'things have improved dramatically' following your appointment and that this 'fantastic school is now even better'.

You and your leadership team have a very good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Your evaluation is accurate. The school's development plan focuses on raising attainment and continually improving the quality of teaching, which your robust analysis has identified as priorities. Middle leaders, in addition to being highly effective teachers themselves, are driving the school's improvements with tenacity as a result of a very impressive coaching and appraisal system.

Governors are very supportive and knowledgeable. They are a reflective group and have good procedures for holding leaders to account for the achievement of pupils. They make effective use of the information they receive, which, coupled with their first-hand experience of school life, enhances their strategic role.

Children enter school in the Nursery and Reception classes with skills that are below those typically expected, especially in language acquisition, reading and writing. This is due, in the main, to the significant numbers of children who speak English as an additional language. Teaching is well focused on personal, social and emotional development and language acquisition to prepare children well for their future learning. Work in pupils' books indicates that they are making good progress in key

stage 1 from their low starting points. As a result of effective teaching, pupils' books across key stage 2 show that pupils make good progress towards national averages in writing and significantly better progress in reading and mathematics. Attainment at the end of key stage 2 in 2016 was below national averages in reading and writing, but above in mathematics. However, you and your leaders are very aware that, despite good progress, attainment in the national assessments at key stage 1 last year was below national averages.

Leaders have tackled the areas identified for improvement at the last inspection with drive and purpose. An area for improvement was to improve the impact of leadership and management by developing the role of subject leaders. Highly effective coaching and the use of research methods to improve practice and provision has resulted in much more focused leadership in these areas. Leaders draw up detailed action plans which they implement and monitor closely, often with appropriate support and challenge from governors.

Another area was to improve standards of achievement. There are admissions to school at times other than the normal admission round, with a constant flow of pupils in and out of school. Leaders and governors are aware that this means that the headline figures for improvements in attainment and progress can constantly change. However, information about those pupils who join school in Reception and remain throughout their primary years shows that these pupils attain well and make really good progress. Leaders are beginning to see this improving picture across the early years foundation stage and Year 1, as the school's nursery provision becomes the first choice for parents. This is due to its growing reputation in the community. However, attainment in reading and writing in national assessments at the end of the Reception Year and key stage 1 remains below national averages.

The teaching of language acquisition and phonics is very effective. These aspects of the curriculum, along with the huge variety of first-hand experiences and a strong focus on oracy, are key to the progress that pupils make across all curriculum subjects.

Pupils enjoy school. They value the support that teachers give them when they are stuck with their work and comment that teachers 'make every lesson fun'. 'Military school' is valued by pupils as a programme to help with their emotional development. Pupils participate in a wide variety of extra-curricular opportunities, including clubs, visits and residential visits (including the opportunity to visit Barcelona).

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Safeguarding procedures are fit for purpose. Leaders and governors fulfil statutory requirements when appointing new members of staff.

Parents and pupils feel that the school is a safe place to be. Leaders, including governors, ensure that staff receive high-quality training. As a result, staff know how

to recognise the signs and symptoms of abuse. Staff are very clear about the school's procedures for reporting and recording any concerns they have regarding the safeguarding of pupils. Leaders are tenacious in their work to protect vulnerable pupils.

Pupils are taught about how to stay safe and keep themselves safe. Leaders have introduced and implemented clear programmes to teach pupils about personal and internet safety. Pupils understand the dangers associated with internet use and report concerns to staff.

Attendance rates of all pupils and groups of pupils are currently in line with, or better than, national averages. Leaders have implemented very good procedures to tackle absenteeism; records show the positive impact these are having. Leaders take their responsibility very seriously for pupils being safe and attending school regularly. Leaders have implemented a balance of rewards for good attendance, sanctions and support. Where attendance and punctuality are an issue for families, they are supported, for example using the school's minibus to collect pupils from home. Sanctions include issuing penalty notices and fines.

Inspection findings

- Pupils at Pleasant Street Primary School make good, and often significant, progress from their starting points. Your analysis of pupil performance and progress in 2016 was robust. It identified the successes and weaknesses in the progress made by significant groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, pupils who speak English as an additional language and those born in the summer months.
- During this inspection I considered the reasons why pupils made strong progress across key stage 2. In 2016, the progress made by boys was stronger than that of the girls in reading. However, in mathematics, both boys and girls made significantly better progress than similar pupils nationally. This is because you have ensured that teachers have an excellent working knowledge of the school's assessment system. They monitor the progress and attainment of all pupils (including boys and girls) and take swift action in response to any differences in progress that they spot. As a result of better-focused teaching and a variety of first-hand experiences, pupils make good progress from their starting points.
- Year 6 readers, especially boys, read with confidence. They have good word-attack skills and use these appropriately to understand their texts. Their comprehension skills are good and they read with good intonation. They self-correct using phonics knowledge. Their inference and information retrieval skills are well developed, enabling them to have a good understanding of what they are reading. They can also make appropriate predictions based on what they have already read. In key stage 2, pupils experiment with sentence structures and more-exciting vocabulary to create interesting pieces of writing. Year 3 pupils use the available writing prompts and resources to improve their work by, for example, including more-descriptive settings.

- Pupils' mathematics books across key stage 2 show a good grasp of a range of mathematical concepts and the relationships between them. Pupils' work shows their increasing ability to manipulate numbers and fractions when calculating. Problem-solving in mathematics is enabling pupils to deepen their understanding of mathematics concepts. Reasoning skills are developing through various challenges and activities.
- School assessment and tracking of progress shows increasing numbers of pupils attaining the levels expected of them (and exceeding) at this stage of the school year. Disadvantaged pupils make better progress and attain particularly well, due to high-quality teaching and targeted academic, social and emotional support.
- I considered the attainment of all pupils in reading and writing, particularly boys in key stage 1 and in the early years. Pupils' writing is supported by a comprehensive range of first-hand experiences, both on the school site, within the local community and wider afield. Some topics and extracts from books have been selected to appeal more to boys. This has improved their engagement and approach to their reading and writing. Reception pupils, for example, were researching worms during the inspection to write their own facts, based on their own observations of worms. Nursery children listened to a retelling of 'Jack and the Beanstalk', including chanting certain extracts to help their understanding of the plot. Year 2 pupils retold the story of 'Grendell' through collective choral speaking to help them include descriptive phrases in their re-tellings. Middle-ability and high-ability pupils in Year 2 include a developing range of vocabulary, noun phrases and a variety of sentence starters in their writing. Lower-ability pupils' writing, however, is usually composed from simple sentences with similar sentence structures and little description.
- Topic books in key stage 1 show pupils' increasing understanding and application of number and writing across the curriculum. Teachers use a variety of resources to support and challenge pupils' thinking. Teachers encourage pupils to talk to each other to share ideas and clarify thinking. This has helped pupils consolidate their understanding of, for example, geographical vocabulary.
- As a result of increased expectations from teachers, the standard of writing, reading and mathematics is improving. Assessment information and the work in pupils' books shows that more pupils are beginning to attain the expected levels than previously. The number of pupils working at the higher level is also rising. However, leaders are aware that the numbers of pupils meeting nationally expected levels, particularly in Year 2 – while improving over time – need to continue to improve.
- The results of the various surveys, including Parent View, showed that the large majority of parents, pupils and staff believe that school leaders deal with behaviour incidents and the rare occurrences of bullying well. Behaviour in lessons and around school is good. Pupils support each other well informally and through a range of structured systems. Pupils play together well. Older pupils explained how they value the range of rewards to promote good behaviour. They also state that poor behaviour is unusual and that 'it is rare for children to call each other names'.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- they build on the improvements they have made to the school environment, the improved provision and better teaching in the Nursery and Reception classes to further improve attainment and progress in speaking, reading and writing in the early years
- they continue to raise standards of attainment in key stage 1, particularly for lower prior-attaining pupils, to ensure that more pupils meet and exceed age-related expectations.

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

Yours sincerely

Ian Shackleton
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and your senior leadership team, parents, five members of the governing body and spoke to a representative of the local authority. In addition, I talked with small groups of pupils around the school, in lessons and formally.

I observed teaching and learning in various classes jointly with the headteacher and scrutinised writing, mathematics and topic books from pupils across the school. I particularly scrutinised the books of pupils in Years 5 and 6, given that pupils in these year groups and their teachers were absent from school on one of two residential visits. In addition, I listened to pupils read.

I examined and discussed a range of documents, including those relating to attendance, behaviour and safeguarding. I looked at the school's self-evaluation of how well it is doing, the school's improvement priorities and the school's assessment information. I reviewed the school's website.

I considered the views expressed by parents through informal meetings and the 24 responses to Ofsted's online survey (Parent View) as well as comments received via the free-text facility on Parent View. The inspectors also took into account the 35 responses to a questionnaire for staff and 37 responses to the pupil questionnaire.