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Mrs Justine Kellett
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Dear Mrs Kellett

Short inspection of Queen's Park CofE URC Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 21 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 February 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since you were appointed in May 2014, the school has suffered from turbulence in staffing which has affected pupils' outcomes. You have taken some difficult decisions to ensure that staffing changes have been made in order to secure improvements in teaching. As a result, staffing is now stable and teaching and learning are much improved. The lower outcomes than usual for pupils at the end of key stage 2 in 2016 do not reflect the rates of progress or attainment of pupils currently at your school.

You and your leadership team have tackled with determination the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Teaching assistants are deployed effectively. Staff are given opportunities to share best practice through coaching, professional development opportunities and work undertaken as part of a local cluster of schools. This has been a marked improvement since you took up post. As a result, there is a consistency of approach to teaching and learning which is leading to stronger progress for different groups of pupils.

Leaders' use of assessment data is effective. Rigorous monitoring and tracking of individuals and groups of pupils are used to identify where additional support is needed for pupils and for staff. Consequently, underachievement is spotted quickly and tackled firmly. Differences in the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and others are diminishing and a greater proportion of pupils than previously are working at the standards expected for their age. Overall attendance has improved over the last

four years and current data shows that this improvement continues.

Pupils benefit from good teaching at all levels. Your staff use their good subject knowledge to ensure that teaching is matched well to pupils' needs. Consequently, most pupils currently in the school, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress from their starting points.

Pupils are attentive in lessons and behave well around school. They are polite and well-mannered and were happy to talk and to share their work with me. There is a consistent approach to behaviour from all adults, which pupils understand.

However, you are not complacent. Alongside the governors, you set clear priorities for development. You recognise the need to ensure that pupils make consistently good progress to further raise attainment at the end of key stage 2. You acknowledge that in order to achieve this, disadvantaged pupils in Years 3 and 4 need to make more rapid progress to catch up with their peers. You are determined to continue to improve attendance because, as you said, 'You can't improve outcomes if pupils are not in school.'

Governors have a wide variety of skills which they use both to support and challenge you and other leaders. They receive good-quality information from you, which means they have a firm grasp of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Parents are very supportive of the school. They speak of the progress that their children make and one said, 'It is a brilliant school that helps my children to grow, both academically and as a person.'

Pupils have opportunities to study a range of faiths, and understand that they should 'treat everybody the same'. Leaders promote British values well, and as a result pupils are prepared well for life in modern Britain.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding is part of all that the school does. Your governors ensure that all policies and procedures are in place, including checks on the suitability of teachers and governors to work with children. Training for staff is comprehensive and up to date. The safeguarding lead works closely with other agencies to ensure that pupils and families receive the support they need. He is tenacious in his approach. You show great determination to ensure that pupils are kept safe and any unknown absences are followed up swiftly. All safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of a high quality.

Pupils are safe and are taught how to keep themselves safe, including while online. They appreciate what the school does to keep them safe when they are out of school.

Inspection findings

- A key line of enquiry for this inspection was about the progress that lower-attaining pupils make in key stage 1. Lower-ability pupils are making rapid progress to catch up with their peers and a greater proportion of pupils in key

stage 1 are on track to reach the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics than in 2016. An increasing proportion of pupils are on track to reach the higher standards.

- The improvement seen in recent years in phonics is evident in pupils' spelling in their independent writing at key stage 1. Evidence in books shows that additional support is having a positive impact on the progress of lower-attaining pupils.
- Some teaching in key stage 1 does not give pupils sufficient time to complete tasks in mathematics and, therefore, pupils sometimes do not see a problem through to the end.
- Another line of enquiry was focused on the progress that lower- and middle-attaining pupils make in reading and mathematics during their time in key stage 2. Middle-ability pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, are making good progress in reading and mathematics. A greater proportion of middle-ability pupils are on track to reach the higher standards in reading and mathematics by the end of key stage 2.
- The new approach to teaching mathematics ensures high expectations. Teachers give lower-ability pupils additional support before mathematics lessons so that these pupils can keep up. Reasoning and investigation in mathematics are given a high priority. Pupils respond to the greater challenges that this presents with enthusiasm and enjoyment. As a result, they are developing a deeper understanding of mathematics. For example, in a Year 5 class pupils were challenged to find the smallest and largest numbers that would round to 26.8. Pupils were able to explain their thinking clearly, using the correct mathematical language. However, there are fewer pupils working at expected and higher standards in Year 3.
- In reading, lower-ability pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, are making good progress across key stage 2. This is as a result of the focus on consistent approaches and clear teaching strategies, which enable pupils to develop better comprehension skills. Teachers ensure that pupils are taught how to 'read beyond the text' in order to make inferences. The most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, read fluently and with expression. Lower-ability pupils use their knowledge of phonics when needed to help them break down words. Pupils enjoy reading and have a variety of interesting books in school. They enjoy listening to their teacher read to them.
- You acknowledge that some of the disadvantaged pupils in Years 3 and 4 are not making the rapid progress necessary to catch up with their peers in mathematics and reading.
- Another line of enquiry was focused on the progress that children make in the Reception class. The majority of children start school with skills and abilities below those typical for their age. An increasing proportion reach a good level of development, and this is now almost in line with the national average. Your teachers provide a stimulating environment which provides ample opportunities for pupils to enjoy books and hear speech. This, along with adults' skilful questioning, enables children to develop good language skills. This was evident from the discussion one teacher had about a 'naughty bus' which had travelled

from London. The children discussed why he might have run away and what he might have seen on his journey. The classrooms are filled with writing and children are encouraged to write in all subjects of the curriculum.

- Strong teaching contributes well to this progress in the early years. Teachers enthuse children and provide a wide range of experiences. As a result, children are attentive and behave well. Children in the early years get a good start to their education and are prepared well for the demands of Year 1.
- The attendance team works closely together to improve attendance and punctuality. Leaders have ensured that parents understand the importance of their children regularly attending school on time. Leaders promote the saying: 'Every day counts. Attend today, achieve tomorrow.' Support is offered to families to help with attendance issues, including nurture groups and morning activities to encourage pupils to attend. Leaders are not afraid to take action if things do not improve.
- Leaders recognise that there are still some groups of pupils who do not arrive at school on time. Changes have been made to the timetable to ensure that little learning time is lost for these pupils.
- Attendance figures, although below the national average, are showing a marked and sustained improvement. The actions taken by leaders have contributed to the continued increase in attendance and decrease in the number of pupils who are regularly absent. Nonetheless, the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent from school remains above the national average.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should improve the effectiveness of their strategies to raise achievement in key stage 2, so that:

- the rate of progress for disadvantaged pupils in lower key stage 2 accelerates
- more pupils are helped to work at a high standard, particularly in mathematics
- attendance rises for the small number of pupils who do not come to school regularly enough.

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

Yours sincerely

Tanya Hughes
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this short inspection, I met with you, members of your leadership team, teachers, and governors. I spoke with a representative of the local authority. You, your deputy headteacher and I visited classes to observe learning and looked at work in pupils' books. I met with pupils throughout the day and spoke with five parents in the playground before school. I considered the 69 responses and the 40 free text comments made by parents on the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View. I heard several pupils read and observed pupils on the playground and in the dining hall.

I conducted a detailed review of safeguarding, including checking on the school's policies, procedures and record-keeping. I talked with you, other staff and governors about how the school ensures that children are kept safe. I also considered a range of other documentation, including school improvement planning and information about pupils' progress and attainment.