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Mr Kieran Welsh
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Dear Mr Welsh

Short inspection of Chorley Astley Park School

Following my visit to the school on 31 January 2018 with Kathleen McArthur, Ofsted Inspector, 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 November 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in certain areas. This may indicate that the school is improving towards being outstanding. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

You have developed a very strong team of staff around you. Every member of staff wants pupils to achieve well, become confident learners and learn how to take their place in the wider world. The commitment of staff shines through their work, as does the school's motto: 'Nurturing Futures'. This commitment is evident, too, in the very rich, interesting learning experiences that staff make sure the pupils have. Pupils really enjoy coming to school. They are extremely proud of the school, as are their parents. Pupils are hungry to learn more about the world around them and, as at the last inspection, their behaviour is excellent.

You have very successfully addressed the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection in 2012. As we visited lessons with senior leaders, we saw pupils, including the most able, working hard, enjoying their learning and taking a real pride in their work. They knew what they were doing and why, and they tried their very best to succeed. Staff give pupils the right levels of support and challenge to help them to learn, to begin to think for themselves and to become more independent.

You have been relentless in ensuring that staff know what makes teaching outstanding. Several marked strengths in the quality of teaching account for pupils' good and often outstanding outcomes. Teachers plan, assess and record pupils' learning meticulously. They have an excellent understanding of what each pupil, from the least able to the most able, needs to do to make progress. The well-kept learning-journey booklets show the richness of pupils' learning in different subjects and the great strides that pupils make in personal development. You and the staff are highly ambitious for every pupil.

Alongside the drive to ensure that pupils make the best progress that they can, you have created an extremely caring, family atmosphere, which pupils, parents and governors all appreciate and praise highly. Parents are highly satisfied with the school. They said that, 'Everyone, from the head to the groundsman, does their utmost for the children.' Typical comments included: 'Children are happy and contented', 'All staff are caring, helpful' and 'It is an amazing school, filled with happy, loved and nurtured children, that goes above and beyond for children and their families'. Every parent said they would recommend the school to other parents, one adding, 'In a heartbeat'.

Safeguarding is effective.

The culture of safeguarding is very strong. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that records are detailed and of high quality. Staff, governors and volunteers are well informed about safeguarding guidance and procedures. All staff undertake a wide range of safeguarding training and receive regular updates at staff meetings and online. Comprehensive risk assessments ensure that the building, all equipment and the playgrounds are safe and supervised well.

Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe. They reported that they feel very safe. They place great emphasis on the trust they have in the staff, saying the staff are always there for them. They also have a well-developed awareness of how to stay safe online. Older pupils clearly understand why the work that pupils do on internet safety is important. Attendance is above average. Staff are meticulous in checking up on all absences and making sure that the pupils are safe and well cared for.

Inspection findings

- To confirm that the school remains good, we discussed and agreed some areas to explore further. The first and second lines of enquiry were to see how much progress pupils currently in school are making in all subjects and whether pupils of all abilities are helped to learn as much as they can.
- You provided a wealth of evidence to show that progress is at least good and often outstanding, particularly in the development of communication skills, in the breadth of learning that takes place and in personal and social skills. We checked

your information against the work in pupils' books, by visiting lessons with senior staff and by talking to staff, pupils and parents. We found it to be accurate.

- Staff build on even the tiniest amount of progress that pupils make. They encourage pupils, including the most able, to take just that step further to reach their goals. As pupils move through the school, they become increasingly able to check their own and each other's learning in different ways.
- Communication skills are a high priority for the school from the time pupils start. Staff plan work that encourages pupils to communicate in different ways.
- Pupils have many opportunities to learn to read, to develop writing patterns and begin to write in sentences, to count and to handle money, to recognise shapes and to solve simple mathematical problems. Pupils who arrive at school not quite ready to learn often develop rapidly in areas such as looking at books and hearing and recognising sounds.
- Pupils benefit from the practical approaches used in different subjects to help them learn. For example, in a history lesson, they became archaeologists who were digging to find and record evidence of how the Vikings lived and dressed.
- By the time they reach the end of each key stage, pupils are as prepared as they can be for the next one. Improvements in the way that information is passed from teacher to teacher mean that staff are well prepared to build on what pupils already know, understand and can do.
- By the time they reach key stage 4, most pupils are ready to take accredited tests and/or external examinations that prepare them for life beyond school. Work with a local high school is ensuring that pupils capable of sitting GCSE examinations can do so.
- A wide range of visits, visitors and lunchtime clubs add to the pupils' enjoyment of learning and to their personal development. Parents say that the school is 'full of optimism'. They praise its 'can-do attitude' and the way it helps their children to succeed.
- Our third line of enquiry was to check whether the provision for pupils' personal development, behaviour and well-being is still as strong as it was at the previous inspection.
- The strong focus on preparing pupils for adult life helps to build their confidence and self-esteem as they move into the unknown. This includes visits to different colleges, and teaching pupils how to take care of themselves, use public transport, and visit shops to buy goods.
- Staff undertake a wide range of relevant training, including for social, emotional and mental health issues, to help pupils deal with complex needs as they arise.

Staff are keenly aware of how to help pupils develop resilience in learning and in their personal lives. They provide outstanding levels of care for all.

- There is a high degree of consistency in everything the school does that ensures that pupils are happy, settled and eager to learn and to share their learning. Pupils listen to each other and to adults really well in class and around the school. They readily engage others in conversation and they care very much for each other.
- Pupils know about bullying and acknowledge it can happen, but do not see it as a problem. They are confident that, if there is any bullying, it is dealt with quickly. They understand how rewards and sanctions help to keep their behaviour on track.
- Our fourth line of enquiry was to look at how effective leaders and managers, including subject leaders, are in checking and improving teaching and learning. We also wanted to make sure all subjects are taught and pupils make progress in them.
- You and your senior leaders are highly effective in improving the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school and in maintaining the extremely supportive and caring atmosphere evident in all of the school's work. You constantly check every aspect of the school's work, advise staff on how to improve and then check again that staff are acting upon the advice given.
- You have made sure that subject leaders receive the training they need to fulfil their roles. They keep a close eye on pupils' progress and make sure that staff teach the right things at the right time in each subject. This information is not as clear as it might be on the school's website.
- Leaders quickly intervene when pupils need additional support. They make sure that, when necessary, support programmes are quickly adjusted so that pupils can continue to learn as well as they can.
- Governors have in-depth knowledge of the school, its pupils and their families. They and the staff appreciate the involvement of different stakeholders in evaluating the school's effectiveness and planning for further school improvement. Governors support and challenge you in equal measure.
- You have identified the right priorities in your school improvement plan. You have shown how you will measure progress towards these priorities in relation to teaching and other provision. However, you do not state how achieving these priorities will help to improve outcomes for pupils.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- information on the website makes it clearer to parents what is taught in each subject and at what stage
- the school improvement plan has clear, measurable targets that show how the actions to be taken will help pupils to make even more progress.

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

Yours sincerely

Doris Bell
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

We observed learning in all key stages. We looked at pupils' books and information about pupils' progress. We held meetings with you and with senior and subject leaders. We met with four governors and held a telephone conversation with the school adviser from the local authority.

We scrutinised a range of documents, including teachers' planning, the school improvement plan and your self-evaluation document. We also looked at records relating to behaviour and safety, safeguarding and attendance.

We gathered views from parents at the start of the day and took account of the 51 responses from the Ofsted online survey, Parent View. We spoke with pupils and staff and took account of the 46 responses from Ofsted's pupil survey and the 56 responses from Ofsted's survey for staff.