

28 September 2018

Mrs Andrea Batley
Headteacher
Longshaw Infant School
Crosby Road
Blackburn
Lancashire
BB2 3NF

Dear Mrs Batley

Short inspection of Longshaw Infant School

Following my visit to the school on 18 September 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 September 2014.

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 specific areas. This may indicate that the school has improved significantly overall. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

Since taking up your post as headteacher in 2014, your well-planned actions have ensured that the school continues to be a beacon of hope and care for children and families in the community. You have a thorough understanding of the unique setting of the school and the varied needs of the families who attend. You, the governors and the senior leaders have an accurate view of the effectiveness of the school. You have implemented highly effective strategies to improve attendance further.

You have created a warm and welcoming school environment. Pupils are enthusiastic and eager to learn. Members of staff greet them warmly as they arrive at school each morning. The behaviour of the pupils continues to be a strength. Pupils treat each other with respect. They told me that behaviour was good in lessons and around school. Parents and carers hold the school in high regard. Those that I spoke to, and those that responded to the Ofsted surveys, were wholeheartedly in agreement that pupils are safe and well cared for. One parent, with a view representative of many, said: 'Teachers do their best to make all children feel special, to see their value and purpose irrespective of their background.'

Parents have the opportunity to bring their children to, or before, the breakfast club each morning. During this time, pupils can access the school's nurture space if they choose to do so. Together with the staff and governors, you have given high priority to the social and emotional needs of the pupils. You believe that they are as important as their skills in mathematics and English. As a result, a significant number of staff are trained to support pupils in this area.

The school environment is bright and stimulating. Teachers celebrate the work of pupils well across the school. The standard of art work around the school is excellent. Pupils complete pieces of art work that utilise many skills that only those well beyond their age would normally have. The curriculum is enriched with many additional experiences. For example, trips to a synagogue, a mosque and a local church enable the pupils to develop a better understanding of the wider aspects of British society away from their local community. Pupils benefit from expert teaching in art, music and physical education. They explore the arts, sciences and physical games through the many lunchtime and after-school clubs. All pupils participate in regular outdoor learning sessions. Teachers actively encourage them to solve problems and take risks while developing their language skills.

Governors have a strong understanding of the many strengths of the school and the areas that need to be improved further. They have ensured that the pupil premium funding is carefully spent so that disadvantaged pupils make progress that is in line with that of all other pupils. They support you and challenge you in all aspects of the school's work. They visit the school regularly to work alongside subject leaders. Governors have ensured that safeguarding remains a strength of the school.

At the previous inspection, you were asked to improve attainment in writing. Since then you have overseen a tremendous improvement in this area. In 2017, 73% of pupils achieved the expected standard in writing. The 2018 provisional results indicate that this has risen further, with a higher proportion of pupils achieving greater depth. As a result, pupils make strong progress in writing from low starting points.

You told me, 'If they can't say it, they can't write it.' You recognised that pupils were entering school with poor language and vocabulary skills. As a result, you introduced a wide range of initiatives to encourage pupils to talk about their writing from an early age. For example, in the Reception class children are encouraged to talk while the teacher scribes for them. As time progresses, children become the scribes and begin to support each other. Across key stage 1, pupils have opportunities to write in structured and unstructured situations. Work that I saw in pupils' books shows that they have many opportunities to apply a wide range of writing skills across the curriculum. They write across a range of genres and apply punctuation and grammatical features with increased levels of independence. With the teachers, you check the quality of writing at regular intervals. As well as this, you work closely with partner schools to compare the quality of writing, which helps you make sure that teachers' assessments are accurate.

Safeguarding is effective.

As the designated safeguarding lead you have ensured that all arrangements for the safeguarding of pupils are effective. All staff have received up-to-date safeguarding basic-awareness training. They have also received 'Prevent' duty training so that they are able to spot potential signs of radicalisation. You and one member of the governing body have taken part in safer-recruitment training.

You work closely with children's social care and referrals to the local authority are timely. You follow up all concerns rigorously. You also work closely with the local junior school, as many families have children in both schools. You work with a range of external agencies to support vulnerable families. For example, you have close links with the local drug and alcohol service and the domestic abuse centre in Blackburn.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection we agreed to focus on several key lines of enquiry. The first of these related to the early years. When you took over as headteacher the proportion of pupils achieving a good level of development was well below the national average. In 2017, 73% of pupils achieved a good level of development, which was higher than the national average. This proportion increased further in 2018. One of the key features of this improvement related to how education in the early years was structured. You redesigned the curriculum, ensuring that activities were better matched to the needs of the children and built upon current topic work. The early years department is now a well-ordered learning environment. Children have many opportunities to develop a wide range of skills. Teaching assistants provide children with effective structured support. Behaviour in the early years is strong. Children have quickly adapted to daily routines and approach their learning with sustained levels of concentration. They make strong progress from low starting points.
- You have been successful in increasing the proportion of pupils who achieve the expected standard in the phonics screening check over successive years. Results improved to above the national average in 2017. This was further improved in 2018, when 87% of Year 1 pupils achieved the expected standard. You told me that the main reason for this sustained improvement was a system of appropriate staff training that you implemented when you saw that outcomes were very poor. First, leaders received specialist phonics training from the local authority. Leaders then trained all other members of the staff. As well as this, you provided teachers with opportunities to work together to plan lessons and observe each other teaching. From observing phonics lessons, talking to staff and pupils and looking at examples of pupils' work, we could see that teachers' subject knowledge is strong, allowing them to question pupils skilfully. Work seen in pupils' books shows that they apply phonics well to their written work.
- The final area that we looked at during the inspection related to attendance. This improved by the end of the 2018 school year. However, despite all your efforts, it remains below the national average and rates of persistent absence are higher than the national average. All pupils in the school depend on their parents to get

them to school on time so you recognise that fostering stronger relationships with parents is key to better attendance. With the support of the attendance officer, the school-and-family liaison officer and the well-being coordinator, you work effectively with vulnerable families. Pupils enjoy being in school. They enjoy achieving awards for good attendance and they work hard to achieve badges and the chance to win a new bicycle. From looking at records of attendance, I could see that the school population changes by as much as 10% each year. New arrivals at the school sometimes only stay for a short time, while permanent accommodation is found for them. A high number of transient pupils has had a significant impact on school attendance figures. However, you understand the need to continue your efforts to improve the overall school attendance figure and further reduce rates of persistent absence.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue in their relentless efforts to improve further the overall school attendance and reduce rates of persistent absence.

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

Yours sincerely

John Donald
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

With you, I carried out visits to each year group. I examined a wide range of school documentation, including the school development plan and the school's self-evaluation. I viewed examples of school assessment information. I scrutinised the single central record and checked records of safeguarding and staff recruitment. I met with a representative of the local authority. I met with the chair of the governing body and three other members of the governing body. I looked at samples of pupils' work in the classes that we visited. I took into consideration the 11 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. I considered five free-text responses and spoke to parents in the playground before the inspection. I also met with pupils informally at lunchtime.