

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mrs J Ngenda
Headteacher
Woolton Primary School
Out Lane
Woolton
Liverpool
Merseyside
L25 5NN

Dear Mrs Ngenda

Short inspection of Woolton Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 16 November 2017 with Schelene Ferris, 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 January 2013.

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 a motivated and determined headteacher who strives to meet the needs of all pupils in your school. Over recent years, you have faced many challenges in relation to staffing. This has included developing the leadership capacity at the school. You have now established a passionate and knowledgeable leadership team which is making many improvements. Governors and your highly effective leadership team share your drive and ambition. As a result, the school is going from strength to strength.

The school's vision and values are a golden thread that permeates the school. There is a culture of high expectations where there is mutual respect and appreciation. The school's collaborative and professional culture ensures that teachers and teaching assistants learn from each other and share what is working well. This reflects the school's motto, 'Learning together, achieving together'. Staff morale is high and there are many opportunities for everyone to learn new skills. Many of the newly created leaders in the school have been 'grown from within'. This is an area of strength in the school and one that leaders are determined to continue.

Children make an excellent start to their education in the early years. This area is well resourced and provides an exciting and stimulating learning environment for children. Teachers identify their interests and harness them to plan activities that

foster their curiosity and desire to learn. Achievement at the end of Reception has been significantly above the national average for a number of years.

Pupils are confident, keen and resilient learners. They enjoy coming to school and their behaviour is good. Pupils have a strong understanding of the school's values and they are proud to be part of the school community. Relationships between staff and pupils are supportive and nurturing. As a result, pupils are keen to learn from their mistakes. Pupils were eager to tell me that one of the best things about the school is that 'We are a big family. We know each other and everyone is kind.' Most parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, are positive about the school. Parents value your leadership and the care and support given to their children by all of the staff. As a parent was keen to state: 'I cannot praise the headteacher, teaching staff and support staff enough. They all go the extra mile for all the children in their care.'

Leaders have dealt with most of the areas for improvement identified during the previous inspection. However, instability in the leadership team has limited the pace of improvement. Teachers now use assessment information effectively to plan relevant and interesting learning activities. During the lessons we observed, pupils worked diligently and were keen to learn. As a result of your work in this area, most pupils across the school are making good progress, especially in reading. Teachers' feedback enables pupils to learn from their mistakes and to challenge themselves further. Pupils understand the feedback and told me it helped them to make progress. However, most-able pupils could be challenged further.

The lead inspector also reported that leaders needed to ensure that pupils have more opportunities to write at length and across the curriculum. Teachers plan a range of interesting writing activities where pupils can develop their writing skills. Engaging texts and interesting topics ignite pupils' interests. Pupils enjoy writing and take pride in their work. Across the curriculum, teachers embed pupils' mathematical knowledge in real-life problems.

Finally, the previous inspection reported that leaders needed to further develop the roles of subject and middle leaders. This was to ensure that they check that their work is bringing about improvements in the progress of pupils. There have been many improvements in this area. Subject and middle leaders are ambitious for the pupils across the school. They now evaluate the quality of teaching and the impact it has on pupils' learning and progress. Assessment information is analysed and informs detailed actions in their areas of responsibility. Governors are kept well informed and leaders are held to account for the progress that pupils make.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders ensure that all pupils are safe, feel secure and flourish. Safeguarding records and policies are up to date and reflect the most recent changes to government legislation. The record used to check the suitability of staff to work with children meets all requirements. Those who are responsible for staff recruitment have completed training at the appropriate level. Vetting procedures for the

recruitment of staff and governors are thorough. Staff and governors receive regular training on safeguarding matters. Consequently, they have a good understanding of their role in keeping pupils safe. Leaders deal with any concerns swiftly and work effectively with external agencies to keep pupils safe.

Pupils say they feel safe at school and teachers help to keep them safe. All pupils whom I spoke to said that bullying is rare. They were all in agreement that if it ever happened, staff would quickly deal with it. Pupils are aware of different types of bullying and know how to stay safe online. Older pupils explained in detail how to stay safe when using the internet or social media. An overwhelming majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, feel that their children are safe and happy.

Inspection findings

- This inspection focused on a number of key lines of enquiry. The first key line of enquiry looked at how effectively you use additional funding to ensure that disadvantaged pupils achieve their potential. You and other staff know these pupils well. You have identified this as a priority in the school and there is now a leader for disadvantaged pupils. Funding is directly targeted to addressing pupils' needs. There are many innovative ways in which you address achievement for these pupils. As a result, they make good progress and, by the time they leave the school, they attain in line with other pupils nationally.
- Additionally, we reviewed the attendance of disadvantaged pupils. This was because in 2016, attendance was low and persistent absence was high for these pupils. Their attendance is tracked and reasons why they are absent from school are known. Action is taken to remove barriers that some pupils may face. The pastoral lead supports families and pupils when there are concerns. Leaders have established effective relationships with external agencies. Individual case studies show that, as a result of actions taken, the attendance of some pupils has improved significantly. However, despite concerted efforts to improve attendance for disadvantaged pupils, it is still low for some. You recognise that there is more to do so that all pupils, especially those who are disadvantaged, attend as regularly as possible.
- The second key line of enquiry considered how leaders are improving the achievement of the most able pupils in key stage 1. This is because in 2016 and 2017, the proportion of pupils who attained at the highest standard at the end of key stage 1 was below the national average. You have identified that the achievement of the most able pupils needs to improve across the school and have taken many steps to address this. Teachers have opportunities to improve their skills and are supported effectively by subject and middle leaders. There has been recent training for staff to improve their skills in planning learning that will enable pupils to reach the highest standard. In pupils' work, exciting and interesting activities capture their interests and encourage them to challenge themselves further. However, improvements made in key stage 1 are still at an early stage. Information you provided and the 2017 published assessment information for key stage 1 show that achievement for the most able is

improving. However, you agree that this needs to develop further, so that the most able pupils have every opportunity to achieve their potential.

- The last key line of enquiry considered the progress that the most able pupils make in writing and mathematics in key stage 2. This is because pupils' achievement in writing and mathematics at the highest standard was below the national average in 2016 and 2017. Teachers have had targeted training to develop their skills in how they can challenge the most able pupils further. They use assessment information accurately to plan relevant learning activities. In mathematics, the most able pupils have many opportunities to develop problem-solving and reasoning skills. Pupils told me that mathematics is now more challenging. They enjoy the problems they are given, especially when they have more time to complete additional challenges which teachers set for them. In writing, pupils have many opportunities to write across the curriculum. Work in pupils' books demonstrates the stronger progress they are making towards the highest standard. In 2017, the number of pupils attaining at the highest standard increased. Despite this rise, you agree that more needs to be done to ensure that a greater proportion of pupils achieve at the highest standards in writing and mathematics.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- recent improvements in the quality of teaching in key stage 1 become embedded so that the most able pupils make good progress and achieve their potential
- they continue the improvements made in writing and mathematics in key stage 2, so that a greater proportion of pupils achieve the highest standard
- they work closely with parents to improve the attendance of some disadvantaged pupils.

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

Julie Kynaston
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, senior leaders, the business manager and your middle leaders. I spoke with members of the governing body and an officer from the local authority. I spoke with a group of pupils and, more informally, with other pupils at social times around the school. Documents were scrutinised, including your self-evaluation and school improvement plan, external audits,

attendance information and safeguarding checks. I reviewed pupils' achievement records. I also visited lessons with you to speak with pupils and look at examples of their work. I observed pupils' behaviour during lessons, at breaktimes and as they moved around the school. I reviewed minutes of meetings of the governing body. I took account of responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 77 free-text responses. I also took account of 49 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and 6 responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire. I completed a review of the school's website.