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Miss P Malcolm
Headteacher
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Dear Miss Malcolm

Short inspection of Lingham Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 1 May 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 October 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. As headteacher, you have established an effective, committed leadership team. You are ambitious for your pupils, their families and the community you serve. As a result, your staff have raised their expectations of what pupils should be able to achieve. Over recent years, you have faced significant challenges related to staffing. It is a credit to your leadership that, within this context, pupils have continued to achieve good standards. Self-evaluation systems and procedures are well developed and support leaders and governors in correctly identifying the school's strengths and weaknesses. The most appropriate priorities are then identified in the school improvement plan.

The governing body is supportive, challenges you appropriately and makes a positive contribution towards moving the school forward. Governors know the school well and carry out their duties effectively. Consequently, there is good capacity to improve the school further. Local authority officers have much confidence in your leadership skills. They have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. They value your contribution to the improvement of local schools as a member of the local authority's improvement team.

Parents and carers I spoke to on the playground and the majority of those who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's Online Survey, said they are happy with the school. One comment summed up the positive feelings: 'Overall, this school has dedicated staff who help our children learn and develop and we would happily recommend it to others.'

Pupils told me they enjoy school and value the teachers. They stated that, 'At Lingham, we treat each other with respect. We treat each other as we want to be treated.'

You have addressed effectively some of the areas for improvement that inspectors identified in the previous inspection report. You were asked to provide more opportunities to extend pupils' learning. Effective questioning ensures that learning across the school has been extended in a successful manner. Teaching assistants help to ensure that pupils' progress across the curriculum is strong. In mathematics, pupils are given challenges and activities that encourage them to reason and explain their mathematical thinking, while also developing their fluency. Evidence from current pupils' books and the school's own assessment information show that there has been strong improvement in pupils' progress in mathematics, with progress by the end of Year 6 in 2017 being in the highest 10% of schools nationally. Teachers analyse pupils' reading assessments to identify the key reading skills which need strengthening and plan daily lessons that focus on developing and extending these key skills. This helps pupils to make good progress in reading over time. In writing, a consistent approach has resulted in pupils having increased opportunities to write at length across the curriculum. As a result of these changes, progress in writing has improved across the school.

During the inspection, we discussed the next steps required to enable the school to improve further. We agreed that pupils need to deepen subject-specific knowledge, skills and vocabulary across the wider curriculum to ensure that progress is as strong in these subjects as it is in English and mathematics. We also agreed that you should regularly review the strategies in place to promote good attendance, so that the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent continues to reduce. Finally, you accepted that pupils' presentation should continue to improve to reach a consistently high standard.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. The record of the checks made on adults so that they can be considered safe to work in the school is accurate. You and your business manager ensure that staff complete all of the required checks before they are allowed to work with pupils. You give safeguarding a high priority, and a strong safeguarding culture runs throughout the school. Your thorough knowledge of each and every child and their families helps you to know when pupils are facing difficulties.

You and the family link-worker liaise closely with a wide range of agencies and the local authority to ensure that your pupils are safe and well supported. You are prompt in making referrals to the local authority when these are necessary. Together, you follow up all concerns and make sure that pupils are kept safe. The majority of parents responding to the Ofsted survey say that their children are safe at the school. Pupils with whom I spoke said that they feel safe at the school. They say that bullying among pupils is rare and is addressed well by staff on the few occasions that it happens.

Inspection findings

- We agreed several areas of enquiry for this inspection. The first of these was the effectiveness of actions taken by leaders to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. Leaders allocate pupil premium funding effectively and evaluate the difference it makes, so that disadvantaged pupils, including those who are most able, make faster progress. Your assessment and tracking system enables teachers to ensure that the progress of disadvantaged pupils is closely tracked and to provide work which is closely matched to the needs of these pupils. High-quality interventions for disadvantaged pupils are in place and provide effective support. This is having a positive impact on their progress. Your most recent performance information shows that the difference in the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and that of other pupils is diminishing. Work in pupils' books also confirms this to be the case. Additionally, in some year groups, disadvantaged pupils are now outperforming other groups.
- The next area we looked at was how well you are improving outcomes in phonics. Staff teach reading to a high standard, with the result that very few pupils require extra practice to keep up. New leadership in early years is having an impact, as is the leadership of phonics and English. In early years, staff provide frequent opportunities for the practice of reading throughout the day. Leaders ensure that most children keep up with their peers from the beginning of the Reception Year. If children do start to fall behind, additional support is provided. Similarly, in key stage 1, teachers plan lessons carefully and pupils engage well with phonics teaching. Opportunities provided in lessons enable pupils to make faster progress, by stretching and challenging them to think independently. Children use their phonic knowledge to write words in ways which match their spoken sounds. Leaders ensure that pupils have the opportunity to practise their phonics skills regularly in other lessons. Observations and written work seen during the inspection showed that the pupils are using and applying their phonic skills effectively across a range of subjects.
- Leaders' work to ensure that boys and girls achieve equally well is effective. This is because your teachers plan effectively to engage both groups of pupils. Learning areas in early years target boys' learning successfully. For example, we observed well-crafted questioning that developed boys' language. You have made good use of quality reading books to inspire and improve pupils' writing, especially for key stage 1 boys. Work in pupils' books shows that opportunities for writing in topic work are motivating girls and boys alike and accelerating their progress. All the boys spoken to were enthusiastic about English and mathematics. In Year 6, pupils enjoyed writing poetry about the plight of refugees. Boys showed engagement in their learning and were able to show creativity in the careful selection of vocabulary for impact. As a result of all this work, boys make good progress in both key stage 1 and 2 in English and mathematics, and in some year groups are now outperforming girls.
- Leaders provide pupils with many opportunities to produce extended writing across the curriculum. However, we agreed that, in many subjects, this has been at the expense of ensuring that pupils develop subject-specific skills. Work in some pupils' books shows, for example, that some work in history develops writing skills rather than in-depth historical knowledge. As leaders, you had already recognised this issue and have begun a review of the curriculum. My scrutiny of pupils' work also showed that pupils' presentation of their work is not of a consistently high standard.

- Finally, I explored the actions taken to improve attendance, which was an area for improvement in the last inspection. You follow up those pupils who are occasionally absent or persistently absent. The vast majority of pupils attend school regularly and this supports their learning. You and the family link-worker have identified the different reasons why pupils have high absence rates and work effectively with parents, holding them to account when their children's attendance falls short of expectations. You work closely with the local attendance officer and support the most vulnerable families. The result is an improvement for targeted pupils. However, the persistent absence of some pupils remains higher than the national average. This hinders their learning.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they regularly review the strategies in place to promote good attendance, so that the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent continues to reduce
- pupils' presentation of work is of a consistently high standard
- pupils' subject-specific knowledge, skills and vocabulary are extended across the wider curriculum to ensure that progress is as strong in other subjects as it is in English and mathematics.

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

Yours sincerely

Simon Hunter
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I spoke with pupils, both formally and informally, about their work and school life. I held meetings with you, senior staff and middle leaders to discuss improvements in their areas of responsibility. I looked at learning in pupils' books. I also spoke to the local authority adviser.

I reviewed documentation, which included your evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses and the school development plan. I spoke with parents at the start of the school day and considered 27 responses to Ofsted's online survey Parent View. I also considered responses to the online staff questionnaire and online pupils' questionnaire.

I visited classes, together with you, to observe pupils' learning. I met with governors to discuss aspects of school leadership and management. I reviewed a range of documentation about safeguarding, including the school's record of checks undertaken on newly appointed staff.