

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mr Chris Willan
Headteacher
Water Primary School
Burnley Road East
Water
Rossendale
Lancashire
BB4 9PX

Dear Mr Willan

Short inspection of Water Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 1 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 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Under your effective leadership, the school has gone from strength to strength. Since your appointment, the number of pupils on roll has almost doubled. Staff and governors share your passion and commitment to do the very best for pupils who attend Water Primary School. The school is a happy and harmonious place for pupils to learn. There is a close-knit, family-orientated and nurturing atmosphere within the school. A warm welcome awaits all who enter, including the high numbers of pupils who join the school in different year groups or part way through the year. Your local authority adviser summed up most eloquently the impact you have had on this school in her comment 'you have brought this school to life'.

Any underperformance is tackled with vigour. For example, poor teaching has been eradicated and the quality of teaching across the school is now consistently good. Outcomes in science are improving. This is because pupils take part in more practical investigations and have opportunities to plan these investigations for themselves, then write up their scientific conclusions.

Staff are proud to work at your school and hold you in the highest regard. They feel valued and well supported. Through your encouragement, many are developing their roles in education.

Parents are equally resounding in their praise of you. Many comment on the positive changes that you have made to the school since your appointment. They are quite rightly proud of the good progress that their children are making. Parents believe 'Water Primary is a great school with brilliant teachers'.

As we toured the school together, we observed happy pupils who were keen to learn. Standards of behaviour that I observed during the inspection were impeccable. Your pupils are delightful and, as a visitor, I was made to feel very welcome. Indeed, I felt very honoured when I was presented with a card welcoming me to the school.

In my discussions with pupils they were keen to tell me how much they enjoyed coming to school. They talked with pride and enthusiasm about their work as school councillors and the very active part they take in decision-making within the school. Others told me about the wide range of visitors such as authors, musicians and footballers that come into school to develop and extend their learning. I was particularly pleased when pupils told me how much they had enjoyed visiting Sikh and Hindu temples to give them an understanding of different faiths and cultures. What came across most clearly to me is how much pupils enjoy outdoor activities. Pupils laughed with delight as they recalled their experiences of making popcorn over an open fire and working as part of a group to make hammocks and dens.

The school has worked tirelessly to address the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. The outdoor play area in early years has been completely revamped and is now a stimulating and exciting place for children to learn and play. Pupils now have more opportunities to write creatively across many areas of the curriculum and solve mathematical problems. More care is now taken to ensure that the most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, are challenged in their learning. For example, pupils are now taught in ability groups for phonics, which ensures that activities are pitched at the right level to drive forward pupils' learning at a pace. In addition, booster classes are provided in mathematics, which have had a positive impact on the number of pupils achieving greater depth in mathematics at the end of key stage 2.

We are both in agreement that the next steps for the school are to continue to improve outcomes in reading and writing across the school. With a greater level of challenge, pupils could make even more progress. To achieve this, the school development plan needs to be refined. Also, we agree that the role of middle leaders within the school could be strengthened further.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that records contain all the required detail. All staff have completed safeguarding training and have a good awareness of the indicators of abuse or neglect and procedures to follow. They have read part one of 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' and have completed training relating to the 'Prevent' agenda. Those who have responsibility for safeguarding are trained to an appropriate level.

The school site is secure. Pupils have a good awareness of how to keep themselves safe when online and an effective filtering system is in place. They are also made aware of the dangers of alcohol and drug misuse.

Inspection findings

- Pupils across the school make good progress in their learning. We agreed that because of high mobility and low numbers within year groups that published data must be treated with caution. From observing teaching, looking at work in pupils' books, reviewing case studies and school assessment information I agree with you that pupils make good progress in a range of subjects, including science, history and geography. However, at times, a lack of challenge slows progress in reading and writing.
- I listened to pupils read in Years 2 and 6. They read with fluency and expression. Comprehension skills are good and younger pupils make effective use of their phonic knowledge to sound out unfamiliar words. Pupils are aware of the difference between fiction and non-fiction books. They can give their views on the characters in the book and describe what they think might happen next in the plot. However, some of pupils in both year groups found the books they were reading too easy. Furthermore, we both agree that better use could be made of the school environment, including the library, to foster and develop pupils' love of reading.
- Examples of pupils' writing are beautifully displayed around the school. Pupils write for a variety of purposes: for example, younger pupils write letters and book reviews. However, from looking at pupils' work it is apparent that, at times, key skills such as correct letter formation and the spelling of key words are not being reinforced. Furthermore, on occasions, the use of worksheets prevents pupils, including those who learn more quickly, from writing at length or in greater depth. We both found this particularly noticeable at key stage 1.
- You lead with confidence, and by example, providing effective and strong leadership. Self-evaluation is accurate. However, targets set out in the school development plan are not measurable or sharply linked to school priorities. This makes it difficult for you and your governors to monitor with rigour the progress you are making towards achieving your goals.
- You keep a close eye on the quality of teaching. Staff appreciate the constructive feedback you give to help them to further improve and develop their practice. There is a strong commitment to ongoing professional development for all staff to keep teaching skills fresh and up to date. Opportunities are also available to share best practice within the school and at other schools within the locality.
- Good use is made of the pupil premium funding to support disadvantaged pupils, including the most able. You have a clear rationale for how this money is spent and the barriers to learning faced by this group of pupils. The effective use of this funding allows this group of pupils to flourish and take part in all that the school offers.
- You and your staff have crafted a rich and exciting curriculum which appeals to pupils' interests. The curriculum is further enriched by a wide range of exciting

trips which engage pupils and arouse their curiosity. However, we agree that middle leaders of the foundation subjects, such as geography and history, do not monitor in sufficient depth the progress that pupils are making as they move through the school.

- You recognise the importance of pupils being fit and active to combat obesity. Consequently, you have extended and developed the range of sporting opportunities and out-of-school clubs available at your school. Pupils now participate in a wide range of competitive sports with local schools. Girls play for Haslingden High girls' football team and links have also been established with Burnley Football Club. Minority sports such as archery, fencing and kayaking are now available for pupils to enjoy. Such effective practice further deepens and broadens the curriculum.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- all groups of pupils are challenged to further improve outcomes in reading and writing
- targets in the school development plan are measurable and securely linked to school priorities
- the role of some middle leaders is developed further so they have a greater impact on teaching, learning and assessment.

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

Sheila Iwaskow

Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, middle leaders and members of the governing body. Informal discussions were held with parents, staff and pupils to seek their views of the school. I went on a tour of the school accompanied by you to see the learning that was taking place. I looked at examples of pupils' work, listened to them read and observed their behaviour during lessons and as they moved around the school. I reviewed a range of documentation including the single central record, the school's development plan and records relating to the monitoring of teaching and learning. Account was taken of the responses to the online Ofsted questionnaire completed by parents.