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Miss Katie Cade
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Dear Miss Cade

Short inspection of Eccleston CofE Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 15 March 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 June 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Your clear-sighted, reflective leadership, backed up by the support of your close-knit staff and knowledgeable governors, has ensured that the school has continued to develop and build on its strengths over the last three years. Pupils continue to reach high standards in reading – so important for learning at all ages across the whole curriculum – and, perhaps even more importantly, they enjoy reading for pleasure.

You have tackled, with quiet determination, the area for improvement at the last inspection, which related to increasing the proportion of outstanding teaching, particularly in mathematics and writing in key stage 1. Your expertise as a local authority moderator of teacher assessment of Year 6 pupils' writing has supported your school's work during a time of educational change that included a new national curriculum and assessment arrangements. Likewise, your mathematics subject leader, who is a mathematics specialist teacher, has helped staff improve their questioning skills. The school's work with the North West Three Maths Hub has supported the introduction of a mastery approach to mathematics, although you and the subject leader recognise that there is still work to do to develop this further.

Leaders have an accurate understanding of the strengths and areas for development in the school's work. My initial discussions with you showed that you had spotted, and were acting on, areas in which data and monitoring information indicated that improvements could be made. For example, a small number of low-

attaining pupils need to make extra progress if they are to catch up with their classmates and be ready for secondary school at the end of key stage 2. Leadership responsibilities are allocated in a way that makes the most of teachers' expertise. This brings coherence to the drive for further improvement. Governors bring a range of knowledge and skills, including considerable educational expertise, to their work to support and challenge the school's leaders. They are well informed about the school's work and are similarly passionate about providing the best education for all pupils. However, they have not ensured that the school's website contains all of the information to enable the school to meet statutory requirements in full. Minor tweaks and updates made during the inspection addressed most shortcomings, except for information about the curriculum for each subject for each year group in the school.

The school is a beautiful and welcoming place for pupils, staff, governors, parents and visitors alike. Some parents and grandparents who were bringing children to school were keen to tell me about it, with almost all speaking very positively about their experiences. Most comments offered on Parent View were similarly enthusiastic, telling of the warm, caring staff and school community, how well individual children were flourishing and about the wide range of trips and visits that enrich children's learning. Good relationships, underpinned by the school's Christian ethos, help pupils grow into well-rounded, friendly, thoughtful individuals. Pupils of all ages were a credit to their school during the inspection. Their behaviour was excellent, as were their attitudes to learning, including the youngest, demonstrating a maturity beyond their ages. The atmosphere in this grade 2 listed school building is calm and purposeful but with a positive 21st-century buzz of learning.

Since the last inspection, the number of classes in this small school has increased from three to four. A new assistant headteacher has been appointed following the previous postholder's retirement last Christmas. She currently supports pupils' progress in mathematics, as part of the school's effective pupil premium strategy.

Safeguarding is effective.

The culture that safeguarding is everybody's responsibility is taken very seriously. One governor's particular expertise brings added strength to this work. Safeguarding policies and procedures are fit for purpose and well established. Records are detailed and of high quality. Rigorous checks are made when staff are recruited, as well as on temporary staff and trainee teachers on placement. Checks are also made on volunteers who visit the school and on any contractors due to be on-site. Training for staff and governors on safeguarding is up to date, including the 'Prevent' duty and recent training on female genital mutilation. Staff teach pupils how to keep safe, including when they are online. The school holds an e-safety award.

All staff who responded to the inspection questionnaire agreed that the school is a safe place to be. So did the pupils with whom I spoke and very nearly all the parents and pupils who completed the online questionnaires, with pupils agreeing that they have someone at school they could talk to if they are worried about

something. A minority of pupils and a few parents expressed some concerns about behaviour and bullying, although pupils were more positive than parents about how well the school deals with any such incidents. Evidence gathered during the inspection did not give any cause for concern for pupils' safety.

Inspection findings

- The school has a track record of pupils' high attainment and strong progress in reading. 2016 was no different, with the progress made by the cohort of Year 6 pupils among the top 10% of all schools, with disadvantaged pupils making even more progress than their classmates.
- Most Year 6 pupils also made good progress in writing, especially those who had reached the expected standard in Year 2 four years earlier. You have identified the need to develop staff's understanding of the characteristics of writing at greater depth, so that more pupils in future reach the higher standard. We discussed how staff might also be more ambitious about the quality of pupils' writing in subjects other than English.
- In mathematics, attainment and progress are not as strong as they are in reading and writing. The results of the new tests in 2016 were affected by five of the 10 pupils narrowly missing the expected or higher standards by one or two marks only. Inspection evidence points to progress that is generally good. The subject leader could see the potential for staff development and curriculum planning of looking at the analysis available this year for the first time of pupils' performance in each question in the Year 6 national tests.
- At key stage 1, pupils' attainment in national assessments was above national averages at the expected standard and at greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics. Although direct comparisons cannot be made with the previous national curriculum and assessments, these results represent good progress for the pupils and reflect positively on the school's drive for improvement in key stage 1 since the last inspection.
- The school is developing a mastery approach to teaching and learning mathematics. Some features are becoming established, such as spending longer on a topic in order to deepen learning, making problem-solving a regular feature of lessons and using practical apparatus to support pupils' conceptual understanding. Other aspects are still developing. These include extending the range of models and images that can be used to represent mathematical ideas and structures, and exploiting opportunities to probe pupils' thinking and develop their reasoning skills.
- Leaders' monitoring of teaching draws on an appropriate range of activities, including lesson observation, work scrutiny and pupil voice. However, feedback to teachers tends to be about general aspects of teaching rather than subject-specific information that could support better teaching and learning of those subjects. Nevertheless, teachers feel well supported by leaders and value the training that they receive.
- Pupils' attendance has risen this year by approximately 1.5% when compared to the same period last year and, at 97.3%, is now above the national average, with

the attendance of disadvantaged pupils slightly higher still at 98.0%. During the last couple of years, the attendance of a few pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has been lower than 95%. This year, it has improved markedly for almost all of them and in one case to 100%.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- outcomes for pupils in mathematics improve, building on developments undertaken so far and paying particular attention to:
 - developing pupils' reasoning about solutions to problems and mathematical structures and relationships
 - teachers' careful selection of activities and consolidation exercises to encourage pupils to think more deeply
 - ensuring that leaders focus on mathematical detail when monitoring teaching and learning and providing feedback to staff.
- the school's website meets statutory requirements with regard to up-to-date curriculum information for each subject and year group.

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

Yours sincerely

Jane Jones
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

- I met with you to discuss safeguarding, the school's self-evaluation and the actions you are taking to raise standards.
- I observed teaching and learning in each of the four classes (Reception/Year 1, Years 2/3, Years 4/5 and Year 6), sometimes jointly with you and at other times with the assistant headteacher. We looked at some pupils' books and spoke with pupils about their learning, and discussed aspects of the teaching and learning afterwards.
- I looked at samples of books of pupils in Years 2 and 5, including their topic work, and a few Reception children's learning journals.
- I heard two pupils in each of Years 2 and 5 read.

- I met with the chair and four other governors.
- I met with the assistant headteacher who leads mathematics and with the class 1 teacher who leads work on pupil premium and special educational needs.
- I met with a group of key stage 2 pupils. I talked informally with pupils and to several parents who were bringing their children to school. 44 pupils completed the online questionnaire.
- I considered the 35 responses to Parent View, an email from a parent and 10 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for staff.
- I read the school's website and various documents including the school's self-evaluation, the development plan, monitoring information, minutes of recent governing body meetings and information about pupils' attendance.
- I looked at the school's safeguarding arrangements, including the checks made on adults working in the school.