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Mrs Sara Lawrenson
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Lawrenson

Short inspection of Newchurch Community Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 12 January 2016, 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 your school was judged to be good in January 2012.

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 provide strong direction for the school, have high ambitions and are determined that Newchurch should be an outstanding school in the near future. You are supported in this by senior leaders and staff who are very committed to the pupils in their care and who work very effectively as a team. Together, you have been rigorous in tackling the three areas for improvement identified in the last inspection report.

To improve pupils' listening skills, you have worked with a number of external consultants, provided training for staff and produced a praise points system to reward those pupils who work hard in class. These developments have resulted in pupils working with enthusiasm and concentration, listening carefully to the teacher and each other, and behaving very well in lessons and around the school.

Since the last inspection, you have revised the school's marking policy. Examination of books showed that this is being applied consistently across the school. As a result, pupils have a clear idea of what is expected of them, how well they are doing and how they can improve their work further. You have found that the 'Red Robin Response' system that you have introduced has been very successful in providing pupils with further challenge to support and extend their learning. For example, a pupil who has understood how to use a new calculation method in mathematics might be given a further short exercise, where that method has to be combined

with a previously learned method and applied to a more difficult question.

In response to the findings of the last inspection, you have thoroughly revised the middle management of the school. The establishment of three curriculum leadership teams is having a positive effect. First, it ensures that management responsibility is now shared across the school. Second, the school is able to make full use of the particular skills, experiences and enthusiasms of each member of staff. Third, staff at all levels and stages of their career have the opportunity to gain experience of managing, through leading particular projects such as the recent Healthy Lifestyles week, and coordinating the work of colleagues from within and outside the school. Lastly, it has enabled the school to put in place a revised curriculum where all subjects are given equal worth.

Safeguarding is effective.

Your school's child protection and safeguarding policy is up to date, detailed and takes account of relevant legislation. Responsibilities are clear, as well as the processes for evaluating the policy. The school has rigorous systems for checking on the suitability of staff to work with children.

In the case of children who are at risk of harm, you and your staff work very closely with families and a range of relevant agencies to provide the support they need.

The pupils whom I met said that they are very happy at school and feel safe there. They also feel safe on the way to and from school. They know whom to approach if they have any problems and are confident that they will receive the advice and support they need. The very rare incidents of bullying in the past have been dealt with swiftly and effectively. The pupils are very enthusiastic about the recent anti-bullying week and the work that they have done with the resident artist to produce friendship benches. On the day of the inspection, they learnt that the school had succeeded in gaining the local authority's Gold Wise Up anti-bullying award. These pupils know how to keep themselves safe, including when using social media. The school's website provides very helpful information and advice for parents on e-safety.

Regular visits from a range of services, including the prison, fire services and St John Ambulance, provide further support to enable pupils to keep safe, as do the road-safety and cycling lessons in Years 5 and 6.

Inspection findings

- You and your senior colleagues monitor teaching regularly and rigorously. As a result, you have a clear and accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses in teaching. Where necessary, you have provided focused, additional help to enable staff to improve their practice. You have also enabled staff to share best practice. This is having a positive effect. Your records indicate that most of the teaching is good, with some being outstanding.
- In the lessons seen, work was carefully matched to the varying abilities of pupils. A particularly good example was seen in a mathematics lesson. In

each case, teaching assistants played a clear, well-planned and crucial role in supporting the teaching and learning.

- The school's records show that pupils, including the most able, are making good progress across the school. Historically, writing has been a challenge for the school because of the low starting point of children on entry. The particular focus that the school has placed on this area has had a clear impact. This was evident from examining books and visiting classrooms. Even the youngest children were very keen for me to look at their writing. This showed a good command of letter and word formation and, in the best instances, the ability to create a series of short, meaningful sentences which the children read out to me with confidence. Throughout the school, and across the curriculum, pupils are given a range of opportunities for extended writing. The quality of the presentation of work is high.
- Attendance rates are consistently better than the national rates and improving, as is pupils' promptness to school and to lessons. Behaviour logs indicate that any misbehaviour is dealt with rigorously and effectively, and parents are appreciative of the work done to bring about improvements where these have been necessary. Pupils behave very well around the school. They relate well to each other and are polite and helpful towards their teachers and visitors to the school. The extensive work that has been done on improving listening has had a positive effect. In every class, the pupils worked with a high level of concentration and interest. The pupils who spoke to me said that their work is rarely interrupted by poor behaviour. If it happens, it is dealt with very promptly.
- The school communicates frequently and openly with parents and takes careful account of their views. The very recent establishment of the 'parent panel' is designed to involve them further in planning, monitoring and evaluating the school's work. Many parents also volunteer to help with a range of activities. The parents and grandparents to whom I spoke were unanimous in complimenting the school. They commented on how enthusiastic their children are about coming to school, on how well they are progressing and on the high level of care and support shown by staff at all levels.
- The views of pupils are also treated very seriously by the senior leaders and governors. Pupils provide regular feedback on the activities in which they have been involved, both inside and outside the classroom, and these take pride of place on the school's website. The regular use of pupil conferencing is also a central element in reviewing and revising policies, and in preparing for the launching of new initiatives.
- Pupils have a wide range of opportunities to contribute to the life of the school and to represent their classmates: for example, on the school council, the eco council and as sports ambassadors. They regularly take part in residential trips and a range of other activities that support their learning. For example, each year group visits a different place of worship to foster their understanding of the range of cultures and faiths in their own and the wider community. On the day of the inspection, Year 2 pupils returned from a visit to the Lowry Art Gallery in Salford. The art work that they had produced there showed an impressive use of water colour techniques and a sensitive response to stimuli in an industrial environment. The high quality and wide

range of the curriculum are reflected in the number of awards that the school has won. These include the Association for Physical Education Quality Mark for Physical Education and Sport, the Gold Artsmark Award, the International Award and the Gold Wise Up Award.

- The governors are experienced, committed and well informed. They work within a committee structure where individual roles and responsibilities are clearly defined. Each governor is assigned to a specific class and/or subject and is able to check, regularly and at first hand, on the quality of teaching and learning, as well as the progress and attainment of pupils. They do their work diligently but without encroaching on your role as headteacher. They fulfil their duties in relation to the performance management of your work and are well informed about the performance of the other staff within the school. Their management of finances ensures that money is used to good effect to support the school's development and to provide an interesting and varied curriculum which pupils clearly enjoy. They allocate the pupil premium funding to an appropriate range of activities to support the progress of disadvantaged pupils. They also report on the impact that this is having. However, it is not possible to tell whether the impact is as much as they intended because they do not present precise targets against which success can be measured. The record of governors' attendance at meetings is not yet on the school website.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to enable staff to share and build on the best practice in the school so that teaching is outstanding
- plans for the use of the pupil premium money include precise criteria against which the impact of the expenditure can be measured.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for Warrington Borough Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Aelwyn Pugh
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, senior leaders, teachers, a representative from the local authority and five governors, including the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body. I looked at pupils' books and observed lessons in each year group. I spoke to pupils in classrooms and held a meeting with seven

pupils, chosen at random from Years 3 to 6. I examined and discussed a range of documentation relating to pupils' progress and safeguarding. I also spoke to the parents or grandparents of 21 pupils from across all year groups and examined the results of the school's own survey of parental opinion. In addition, I spoke to a number of support staff in and around the school.