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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mr Matthew Hover
Headteacher
Ashton Hayes Primary School
Church Road
Ashton Hayes
Chester
Cheshire
CH3 8AB

Dear Mr Hover

Short inspection of Ashton Hayes Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 28 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in April 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since taking up the post of headteacher, you have skilfully moulded an aspirational learning culture for pupils, staff and governors by providing a clear strategic vision to improve the school further. You have recently appointed a new deputy and are expertly crafting a leadership team to continue to enhance the school leadership capacity. You are ably supported by middle leaders who correctly identify the next steps required to ensure continued positive impact on pupil outcomes. The school's motto, 'Aspire to be amazing', is central to the high expectations that you and your staff promote for your pupils.

You have tackled successfully the areas identified as being in need of further improvement at the last inspection and, as a result, governance is much stronger. Governors are highly skilled and provide a good level of challenge, using 'comment, clarify and challenge' as an approach to critical accountability. They have accurate knowledge of the strengths and development needs of the school and take effective actions to address any weaknesses identified. Governors actively seek training, including safeguarding, to ensure that they continue to fulfil their duties effectively.

Pupils spoke enthusiastically about Ashton Hayes and are rightly proud of the school. They particularly enjoy extending the cultural links made with France and Uganda, through letter writing and associated curriculum activities. Older pupils enjoy taking responsibility for younger pupils and are encouraged to show respect

and tolerance toward others. My observations around the school and my conversations with pupils showed them to be articulate, polite and enthused to learn. This demonstrates well the school ethos of determination and resilience.

Parents are very happy with the education that their children receive. One parent summed up the views of many when they said: 'Ashton Hayes provides a safe, stimulating and nurturing environment where my child makes excellent progress.'

You have identified the correct priorities for the next stage of development at Ashton Hayes and are taking the right steps to make the improvements. You have placed a priority on pupils' writing across the school. This is evident in both the published and current school progress data and through the many impressive writing displays throughout school. However, the full impact of the application of grammar, spelling and punctuation in writing is not as evident. This continues to be a focus for the school to enable pupils to reach higher standards.

Safeguarding is effective.

The checks on the suitability of staff to work with children are fully compliant with government requirements. Staff and governors have received up-to-date safeguarding training and are aware of the different types of abuse and the signs to look for in monitoring pupils' welfare.

Leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose, and records maintained are detailed and of a high quality.

Pupils said that they feel safe in school. You ensure that the curriculum provides pupils with the necessary skills to keep themselves safe, including when working online. Pupils understand the different forms of bullying and told me that bullying of any kind is rare. They were enthusiastic about sharing 'cyber bullying events' and about how this supported their understanding of staying safe.

Inspection findings

- I explored a number of key lines of enquiry during this inspection. I looked at: how well leaders challenge learners to gain greater depth in mathematics at key stage 2 and expected levels of attainment in mathematics at key stage 1; how well grammar, punctuation and spelling support outcomes in writing; and whether governance continues to be effective from the last inspection.
- You have taken effective action to improve provision and pupil outcomes in mathematics. Your school's improvement plan shows that you introduced new strategies to the teaching of mathematics, for example by providing more frequent and structured opportunities for problem solving and reasoning. Consequently, pupils are now making good progress across all year groups, and the most able pupils are making rapid progress, particularly in key stage 2. The effectiveness of these strategies is also clearly evident in the school's current progress data as well as from the good standard of work in pupils' books in both key stage 1 and key stage 2.

- Governors now have regular meetings, structured around pupil outcomes and data analysis, and this has established a strong and secure understanding of the school and its priorities. Governors are delighted that they are provided with opportunities to work closely with school staff. They have jointly explored barriers to pupils' learning and constructed the vision and values of Ashton Hayes. As a result, the morale of staff and governors is high. Staff and governors are very positive about the quality of guidance and support that they receive and the relentless focus that you have on achieving the best outcomes for the pupils. Governors are well placed to provide you and your leadership team with a strong level of challenge and suitable support.
- Pupils' books demonstrate good progress in writing across all year groups. Writing is a priority, and this is evident in examples of pupils' good-quality work on display and the care and attention given to displaying the work effectively. Current tracking of writing indicates that progress and attainment at both key stage 1 and key stage 2 will be well above expected standards and at greater depth in 2017. Strategies have been put in place to address spelling, punctuation and grammar. However, these have not had sufficient time to demonstrate full impact in order to improve pupils' writing even further.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers enable pupils to improve the accuracy of grammar, punctuation and spelling in their work
- pupils' improved skills and knowledge of grammar, punctuation and spelling are consistently applied to their written work across all subject areas.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, 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

Gaynor Rennie
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, the deputy headteacher, senior leaders and governors to discuss safeguarding and the school's progress since its previous inspection, including the key lines of enquiry that we agreed at the start of the inspection. We made visits together to see pupils learning in all classes and looked at a range of pupils' work. Discussions were held with 10 pupils, which focused on learning and safety. I spoke with a representative of the local authority. I met with

four governors, including the chair and vice chair of the governing body. I scrutinised a range of documents provided by the school, including safeguarding information, policies and the school's self-evaluation. I observed pupils at playtime. I listened to some pupils read in Year 2 and Year 5. In addition to this, I assessed the school's safeguarding arrangements, including the school's record of suitability checks on staff. I took account of 49 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, which included 46 written comments as well as an email from a parent. I also considered 13 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and 67 responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire.