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Mr Paul McDowell
Headteacher
Prospect Vale Primary School
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Dear Mr McDowell

Short inspection of Prospect Vale Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 24 July 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 November 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

With the staff, you have successfully created a vibrant and welcoming school environment. You work closely with partner primary schools to help you keep a check on the quality of work in your school. Furthermore, good transition arrangements with neighbouring high schools help your oldest pupils to move up successfully. Since the previous inspection, the profiles of the staff and senior leadership teams have changed. You have managed a high turnover of staff well, particularly in the early years, ensuring that the quality of teaching across the school remains strong.

The majority of parents and carers that I spoke to hold the school in high regard. Those parents that I spoke to and those who responded to the Ofsted survey were typically positive in their views of the school. One comment was typical of many, and included, 'Staff have a warmth about them which eases any worries and they truly care about each and every child.' Parents feel that their children are safe and well cared for at this school.

The behaviour of pupils is a strength of the school. Pupils behave well in lessons and their conduct around school is good. Pupils that I spoke to and observed were polite and courteous. They told me that bullying and name-calling were rare events.

Pupils said that their teachers are good at listening to their concerns. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about the many trips and visits that they have experienced as part of the curriculum. Year 3 pupils recounted their trip to the canal and what it was like to travel on a canal boat through a lock gate.

Pupils were particularly articulate in their views about diversity. They recognise that each person is unique and that differences should be celebrated. Pupils told me about the work that had been done about Alan Turing, the famous local computer scientist. They were able to explain to me that he suffered for being gay, and how being gay was deemed unacceptable at that time.

Members of the governing body are committed to supporting the school in all aspects of leadership and management. They are clear about the school's many strengths and are honest about what needs to improve further. They regularly visit the school to engage in a wide range of activities with staff and pupils. For example, they often attend school trips and tour the school with senior leaders to look at teaching and learning. They also carry out checks on pupils' books with teachers. Governors carry out their statutory responsibilities well.

At the previous inspection, you were asked to improve the teaching of phonics, particularly in the early years. You have taken effective action. Your staff have had comprehensive training with a focus on the delivery of phonics. Pupils are taught in ability groups across the early years and key stage 1. Leaders make careful checks on planning to ensure that it is focused and well-planned in order to meet the needs of the specific groups. Since the previous inspection, the results in the national phonics screening check have continued to rise and in 2017 were well above the national average.

Leaders were also asked to make it clear to teachers what aspects of their practice needed improvement. You have reviewed how you monitor the quality of teaching, learning and assessment at the school. You make sure that observations of teaching link to the work seen in pupils' books and assessment information on pupils' progress. You use this information effectively to help teachers improve their practice and understand how they contribute to overall improvement in the school.

Our review of pupils' work identified many strengths. However, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to hone their writing skills across the curriculum. Additionally, expectations of pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar skills are not as high in other subjects as they are in English.

Early years children do not always understand what is expected of them. Also, there are limited chances for children to use their early reading skills.

Safeguarding is effective.

As the designated lead for safeguarding, you have ensured that all arrangements for the safeguarding of pupils are effective. You make careful checks on the suitability of adults to work with pupils. Several members of staff and governors are

trained in safer recruitment. All staff are up to date on safeguarding basic awareness training. Part of this training focused on 'Prevent', which is the government training to spot potential signs of radicalisation. As a result, staff understand their roles and responsibilities.

When needed, you work closely with the referral team at children's social care. You work with partner agencies to ensure that the needs of vulnerable pupils and their families are met. Pupils are knowledgeable about different aspects of staying safe. They know not to share their personal information over the internet.

You are proactive in your determination to make the school even more secure. For example, recent changes to the school entrances have ensured that pupils are able to enter and exit the school safely.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry was about the quality of provision in early years. Children make good progress from their different starting points in early years. The children in the Nursery and Reception classes benefit from being in calm learning environments. The classrooms and the outdoor area include a wide range of resources. Children are happy, confident learners. Children have many opportunities to explore, build and create. Some of the children told me clearly what they were learning about such as how to draw a map to help with their bear hunt. Others were able to discuss how they had created a repeating pattern as part of their learning in mathematics.
- A small number of parents that I spoke to, and others who responded to the Ofsted survey, shared their worries about high staff turnover in the early years classes. You managed these unavoidable changes well, so that the proportion of pupils achieving a good level of development in 2018 has not fallen as a result. Staffing in the early years is now stable.
- Some children in the early years lack specific direction and are not always clear in what they need to do or learn. This limits their growing independence. Also, children do not have enough opportunities to use their early reading skills.
- Another focus for the inspection was pupils' progress in writing across the school. Results of previous national assessments indicate that boys did not do as well as girls in writing at this school. Information gathered during the inspection confirms that boys are now doing as well as girls, and in some classes are doing better. The quality of writing in pupils' English books is good. Pupils across key stage 1 and key stage 2 are making good progress. Pupils have many opportunities to write across the curriculum. For example, in Year 4, pupils wrote about the Stockport Air Raid Shelters and Year 6 pupils wrote about ancient Mayan civilisation. My review of books revealed that pupils do not have enough opportunities to practise their writing in subjects other than English. Teachers do not have the same high expectations that pupils should use their spelling, grammar and punctuation skills equally well in other subjects as they do in English.
- Finally, the inspection focused on the curriculum. Inspection evidence confirmed

that pupils benefit from a broad and rich curriculum that focuses well on the progression of skills in individual subjects.

- Pupils achieve well in science. Children in the early years apply their pictorial skills well to scientific planning. As pupils move through the school, their skills in fair testing become much more evident. By the time pupils reach Year 5, they independently apply their mathematical skills to collect and present data for different purposes. For example, they create complex graphs that plot the speed at which boiling water cools.
- Pupils' geographical skills are developed well through numerous visits away from the school. For example, Year 4 pupils visited the coast in Formby to investigate the effects of coastal erosion and the impact of off-shore windfarms. The effective development of mapping skills is evident in all year groups, for example the oldest pupils use six-figure grid references confidently to find locations. Year 6 pupils visit London each year, where they put their accumulated geographical knowledge and skills to the test.
- Pupils have a comprehensive understanding of chronology before they leave school. The richness of the school's history curriculum is celebrated in a large mural in the main school corridor. Pupils learn about key figures who have shaped the nation, for example Winston Churchill, Emmeline Pankhurst and Alan Turing. The use of primary sources together with visits to museums and galleries allows pupils to have a strong historical understanding.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- staff in early years, plan more opportunities for children to develop greater independence in their learning and to practise their early reading skills
- pupils have more opportunities to practise their writing across the curriculum
- pupils apply the same high standards achieved in their English work to their writing in other subjects.

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

Yours sincerely

John Donald
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, we visited classes in all key stages. We looked at examples of

pupils' writing in the classes that we visited. I spoke to a group of eight pupils about their experiences of school.

I considered the 18 responses to the staff survey. I considered the 39 free-text responses and the 64 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire.

I met with parents before school. I met with five members of the governing body and members of your middle leadership team. I met with the subject leaders for science, history and geography, and together we reviewed samples of pupils' written work.

I reviewed a range of documents, which included the school self-evaluation and school development plan. I viewed records of monitoring, safeguarding records and training logs. I scrutinised the school single central record.