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Mrs Monica Middlehurst
Headteacher
R L Hughes Primary School
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Dear Mrs Middlehurst

Short inspection of R L Hughes Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 5 December 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 January 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You, senior leaders and governors have high aspirations for all pupils at R L Hughes. Your aim of 'exploring, learning, growing together' is reflected in the opportunities you offer all at the school. Leaders and governors know the strengths of the school and the aspects which need to improve.

Relationships between staff, pupils and families are strong. Families feel that staff know them and their children well. The vast majority of parents and carers who responded to Ofsted's parent survey are very satisfied with the work of the school. Many commented particularly on your leadership and the care and attention you show them. They appreciate the extra support that you give their children when needed. Several commented on how much their children enjoy school because of the way you plan learning. As one parent wrote: 'The teachers have never failed to impress us with their imaginative delivery of the curriculum and it certainly gets children engaged.'

Morale is high. You have encouraged staff to make the best use of training opportunities. Teachers have observed strong practice in other schools and successfully use those ideas in their own classrooms. Through this professional development, they have improved their teaching. Staff work strongly as a team. Teachers and teaching assistants work skilfully together to support pupils' individual learning needs. Teachers share their knowledge with other schools within the local

authority. Subject leaders are leading with enthusiasm. They develop teaching and learning effectively by guiding and monitoring their colleagues.

Teachers work successfully to ensure that pupils enjoy their learning in a range of subjects. As a result, pupils are well-behaved and enthusiastic learners. Pupils spoke with pride about their music lessons. They love singing to an audience and perform with skill and confidence. Pupils enthusiastically described the many sporting and extra-curricular activities available to them, such as choir, football club and swimming.

The previous inspection team asked you and governors to improve teaching and the progress pupils make in writing. You have taken effective action to improve the teaching of writing across the school. As a result, pupils make good progress. You have increased the numbers of pupils who reach the expected standard by the time they leave school at the end of Year 6. You have made changes to how staff teach writing in the early years, so that children develop their fine motor skills and are ready to write. An additional next step for the school is to improve writing opportunities for children in the Nursery and Reception classrooms, including the outdoor areas.

You have improved how staff teach reading. Pupils read with confidence and by the end of key stage 2, a higher proportion of pupils attain the national standard for their age. The number of pupils reaching greater depth is now well above the national average. Teachers monitor the progress that the disadvantaged pupils make. An additional next step is to plan extra and effective support where teachers identify gaps in pupils' reading skills.

Safeguarding is effective.

- Safeguarding pupils is a high priority and a strength of the school. Staff make sure that pupils feel safe. You and your staff have a detailed knowledge of pupils and their families and you give them the support and guidance that they need. Good systems are in place to identify any concerns about a child. You work closely with parents and are persistent with other agencies, such as social workers, to make sure that pupils receive the support that they need to be safe.
- You have developed effective systems to train and update staff about safeguarding. Staff are vigilant and know what to do if they have concerns about a pupil's safety and welfare. Procedures to check on the eligibility of staff and visitors to be around pupils are thorough and effective. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe including when using the internet.

Inspection findings

- The inspection focused on a number of key lines of enquiry, the first of which related to pupils' progress in writing. Pupils write imaginatively. Teachers make sure that pupils use their grammar, punctuation and spelling skills in their writing, including in other subjects such as history and science. Pupils present their work well. They edit and improve their writing successfully. However,

subject leaders have identified that pupils should write for different purposes more frequently. In some classes, pupils have few opportunities to develop their skills such as in writing letters or persuasive texts.

- Another key line of enquiry related to how well pupils achieve in reading. You have made sure that the whole school loves to read. Pupils are enthusiastic about the recent changes that you have made to the well-stocked school library. They enjoy the many opportunities that you give them to read for pleasure. Teachers check pupils' reading skills and plan learning activities to develop pupils' learning. Because of changes that you have made, the proportion of pupils attaining the expected standard in phonics has risen each year. Similarly, by the end of key stage 2, a higher proportion of pupils attain the expected reading standard for their age. Pupils read with fluency and expression. However, there is still more to do to make sure that all disadvantaged pupils make better progress. Leaders do not always make good use of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils to ensure that those falling behind in reading receive additional and effective support.
- I also focused on pupils' attendance. Pupils enjoy coming to school and attend regularly. However, in 2016, attendance for disadvantaged pupils and for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities was lower than that of other pupils. You and your staff have put in place rigorous systems to improve pupils' attendance. In addition, you have provided extra support for some families. Consequently, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities has improved.
- My final key line of enquiry was to focus on how well children learn in the early years. In 2017, by the end of the early years, children's progress in writing was below average and less than in previous years. You have changed the leadership of the early years and improved the environment, including the outdoor classroom areas. You have looked carefully at where children need additional support in their learning and have planned activities to match children's needs, particularly in early reading, writing and mathematics. Staff provide well-planned extra support to develop children's speaking and listening skills. Children are making better progress in their writing. Children's writing books show that they are developing early writing skills. However, in both Nursery and Reception, teachers do not always plan engaging activities to develop the early writing skills of all children.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the attainment of children in the early years increases, so that more reach the early learning goal in writing and a good level of development
- additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is used more precisely to enable a higher proportion of these pupils to make good progress in reading

- all pupils have more opportunities to write for a range of purposes and audiences.

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

Yours sincerely

Elizabeth Stevens
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you, the deputy headteacher, the assistant headteacher and a group of teachers, including middle leaders. I also met with five governors. I spoke to a representative of the local authority. I met with 14 pupils from key stages 1 and 2, and spoke informally with other pupils during lessons. With the headteacher, I visited all classes, where I observed teaching and learning, looked at pupils' work and spoke with pupils. I also heard pupils from Year 2 and Year 6 read. I carried out a scrutiny of pupils' work across the school.

I took account of 57 responses to Parent View, the Ofsted online questionnaire, including 54 free-text responses. I also considered the responses of 17 staff to Ofsted's online questionnaire. I looked at a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and school improvement plan and information about pupils' attainment and progress. I also evaluated safeguarding procedures, including policies to keep pupils safe, safeguarding checks and attendance information. I undertook a review of the school's website.