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Mrs Gillian Leigh  
Headteacher  
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Lancashire  
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Dear Mrs Leigh

### **Short inspection of Marsh Green Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 12 September 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 July 2013.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. The nurturing ethos that is at the heart of Marsh Green Primary is tangible throughout the school. You have created a culture where everyone is welcomed and respected, with pupils' well-being at its core. Pupils flourish in this very caring environment.

Your excellent leadership means that the school is in an even stronger position now than it was at the last inspection. You are rightly proud of the school's many strengths but, more importantly, you have a sharp focus on the areas that still require further improvement. Your complete commitment, not just to the school, but to the wider community that it serves, is to be commended.

It is evident that the work that you and other leaders do makes a real difference to families in the local area. You are ably supported by a very strong team of dedicated staff who are fully committed to your vision. From the breakfast club at the start of the day through to the after-school enrichment activities, staff play a crucial part in the school's success. It is clear that they do this because they themselves feel valued.

Pupils really enjoy coming to school. The attendance rate is well above the national average. Particularly impressive is that only a very small proportion of pupils do not attend school regularly. The school's persistent absence figure is a quarter of the

national average. All pupils who spoke to me were extremely positive about their school and really appreciate the family ethos. As one pupil said: 'Our school is really welcoming. You feel like part of a family.'

This family ethos is something that parents also value. All the parents that I spoke to at the start of the day, and those who commented on the Ofsted online questionnaire, were full of praise for the staff in school. Several parents spoke of how staff had gone 'above and beyond' to support their children, describing the teachers as 'amazing'. Others spoke of how their children had 'blossomed' and 'come on so well' during their time at the school. A common thread in all parents' comments was how much their children loved coming to school.

You are sharply aware that pupils make much better progress in key stage 2 than they do in key stage 1. You know the reasons for this and have taken action to remedy the situation. You believe that from this September you have the right staff in place and that the quality of teaching and leadership in this key stage is now strong. It is far too early to see the impact of these staffing changes, but you are confident that outcomes for pupils at the end of Year 2 will represent an improvement on recent years. You also believe that these staffing changes will bring about the much-needed improvement to the number of pupils who reach the expected standard in the phonics screening check.

The areas that you were asked to improve at the last inspection related to pupils' progress in reading, and how this can support their writing. You have gone some way to achieving this, particularly in key stage 2. The unvalidated overall progress score for reading in 2017 is higher than the national score and represents a significant improvement on last year. However, you and governors know that the profile of reading needs to be raised across the school in order to improve standards in this area further.

Since the last inspection, pupils' outcomes at the end of key stage 2 have improved. However, you are aware that you could do more to ensure that the most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, achieve the highest standards.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You ensure that a strong culture of safeguarding is at the heart of the school. All safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose, including protocols and practices for record-keeping. Systems to ensure that only suitable people are recruited to work with children in the school are secure.

You and your staff know your pupils and their families extremely well. This, coupled with the training that staff receive, means that you are all well placed to spot any signs or symptoms of potential risk or abuse.

You and key members of staff meet weekly to discuss how you can best safeguard and support individual pupils. The very effective way that you and your pastoral leader work with families, and the strong links with the local community, contribute

significantly to the effectiveness of safeguarding in the school.

## **Inspection findings**

- My main key line of enquiry for this inspection related to whether teachers were supporting pupils effectively to make the best possible progress in reading, and whether this was helping them to improve their writing. This had been an area for improvement since the previous inspection. The unvalidated overall progress score for reading in 2017 is above the national score. Teachers have worked effectively with this cohort of pupils to enable them to make good progress. A higher proportion of this cohort achieved the expected standard and higher standard than in 2016. While you are pleased with this improvement, you are not complacent. We discussed your concerns about the progress that pupils make in reading throughout their time in school, particularly during key stage 1.
- You explained to me the reasons for the low number of pupils achieving the expected standard in the phonics screening check over recent years. These relate to the quality of teaching and the way that staff were using the reading scheme. Teachers and support staff are now consistently providing pupils with the phonics skills that they need to make good progress in reading. This was evident when I listened to some pupils reading. You are confident that the changes that you have made to the leadership and staffing in this area will mean that a higher number of pupils will achieve the expected standard in the phonics screening check at the end of this year.
- Evidence gathered during the inspection indicates that reading does not have a high enough profile across the school. For example, the reading environment in many classrooms is not conducive to encouraging a love of reading. Also, pupils' reading records are not used effectively to track their progress. This means that some pupils are reading books that are not challenging enough for them. Tracking pupils' reading progress accurately was an area of concern at the previous inspection. Although you have made improvements in this area, there is still some cause for concern here.
- Governors have recently carried out their own evaluation of reading across the school and have reached similar conclusions to the inspection findings. My discussion with governors shows that they understand the importance of having a strategic plan to improve standards in reading further. The chair of governors has the relevant skills and expertise to offer practical support in this endeavour. The way that governors have approached the issue of reading reflects the very effective way in which they work alongside you to bring about improvements in the school.
- In 2016 in key stage 2, no pupils achieved the high standard across reading, writing and mathematics. In key stage 1, no pupils achieved greater depth in reading, writing or mathematics. Consequently, I was interested to find out whether the most able pupils were being challenged effectively. The unvalidated outcomes for 2017 indicate that more pupils achieved the higher standard in reading and mathematics in key stage 2. While this is encouraging, we agreed that you could do more to ensure that the most able pupils achieve their full potential. Leaders are not focused enough on what would help these particular

pupils to achieve the highest standards. There are not enough strategies that target the specific needs of the most able, including those who are disadvantaged. We discussed, for example, how pupil premium funding could be used more effectively to support and challenge these pupils.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they take action to raise the profile of reading across the school
- more pupils achieve the expected standard in the phonics screening check
- they support and challenge the most able pupils to achieve high standards, including targeting pupil premium funding more effectively in this area.

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

Anne Seneviratne  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with you; three members of the governing body, including the chair; and two representatives of the local authority. I met formally with two groups of pupils and talked informally with others in lessons. I listened to pupils read. I also talked with parents informally at the start of the school day. Accompanied by you, I observed teaching and learning across the school. I examined your self-evaluation document. I also undertook a review of the school's website. As part of the inspection, I considered the responses to Ofsted's Parent View and responses from parents to Ofsted's free-text survey.