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Mr Kevin Watts  
Great Dunmow Primary School  
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Dear Mr Watts

### **Short inspection of Great Dunmow Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 27 March 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 April 2014.

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

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

Since your arrival in September 2014, your determination and ambition have inspired pupils, parents and carers, and staff. They share your vision that every pupil will succeed, and a statement said to you by a child, 'OK is not good enough', has become central to what happens at Great Dunmow Primary School. You have an honest and accurate view of what your school does well and what could be even better.

The school is a vibrant, inviting place, where staff feel valued and pupils thrive. A parent told me, 'The school environment brings the best out of the children.' Pupils enjoy coming to school. They feel that you have created a fair environment where their opinions matter and where they are helped to achieve their best.

You, your team and governors have ensured that relationships with parents are extremely positive. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the nurturing, supporting environment that you have established and expect. One parent commented, 'My child skips into school every morning and as a parent I couldn't ask for more.'

At the previous inspection, you were asked to raise the quality of teaching and learning to outstanding. The support that you and your senior leaders have put in place to improve teachers' and teaching assistants' practice is well documented.

During our visits to classrooms we saw teachers questioning pupils to check their understanding to help them progress faster. Teachers practice has improved and continues to improve.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The school meets all statutory requirements and responsibilities with regard to safeguarding. Leaders check to ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose, and governors maintain an excellent oversight of all issues connected to pupils' safety and welfare. School records show clearly that leaders take timely and appropriate action to protect children when necessary.

Pupils say that they feel happy and safe, not just because of what teachers do, but that other pupils in the school make them feel safe too. They particularly like the buddy system, where older pupils are role models for younger children. The pupils I spoke to explained that teachers help sort out any issues so quickly that there isn't any chance of bullying.

Parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, overwhelmingly said that their children are happy and secure at the school. You take the approach that everyone is responsible for safeguarding and ensure that all staff receive appropriate and regular training.

### **Inspection findings**

- In order to check that the school remains good, I followed a number of lines of enquiry. Firstly, I looked at how effective leaders have been at ensuring that the high standards that were achieved in English and mathematics last year are being sustained.
- We saw a culture across the school that is about ensuring that everyone had to do better. You and your deputy explained the regular meetings that are held to ensure that all pupils achieve their potential. The quality of English and mathematics work was high across a range of books and year groups. The large majority of pupils respond well to further challenges set by the staff to deepen understanding.
- You have established weekly teacher-led intervention sessions. These have ensured that all pupils at risk of not achieving their potential in English and mathematics are well supported. The impact of these interventions is evident in the strong progress that children are making across all year groups.
- English and mathematics subject leaders have significantly helped the development of the teaching of their subjects.
- You have developed a very strong individual tracking system to ensure that all pupils are able to reach their potential, no matter what their starting point in English and mathematics. Your internal tracking shows that the very large majority of pupils are on track to again reach the high standards that have been achieved in previous years.

- My second line of enquiry was to check whether the most able pupils and boys do as well as they should, particularly by the end of Year 2. I chose to look at this area because results of the 2017 national assessments showed that the most able pupils and boys did not have as high results as other pupils within school.
- You had already identified progress of boys up to the end of Year 2 and the most able pupils as areas to improve this year. You have taken decisive action to address these areas.
- You have chosen to teach pupils in Year 2 according to their aptitude and ability, splitting classes into smaller teaching groups. This is to support pupils to gain a greater depth of understanding. We saw in lessons and in books clear evidence that the most able pupils and boys in Years 1 and 2 are doing well and making strong progress in English and mathematics.
- My final line of enquiry looked at how well pupils develop skills in areas of the curriculum other than English and mathematics. I wanted to determine how leaders are ensuring that pupils make consistently good progress across all subject areas.
- We found that a range of subject specific skills are being taught across year groups. However, teachers are not consistently effective in enabling pupils to make good progress in developing skills and understanding in subjects other than English and mathematics.
- Arts and science weeks have raised the profile of subjects. Science subject leaders have developed very good links with engineers from Stansted who visited to show how science applies to the real world. The women in science focus this year has resulted in more girls becoming interested.
- You correctly judge that teachers' expectations of what pupils can and should achieve in subjects across the curriculum are not always high enough. Pupils' progress in subjects other than English and mathematics across the curriculum varies. This results in fewer pupils achieving the higher standards of which they are capable in these subjects.
- Subject leaders are not as confident about the quality of their subjects across the school and you rightly identified this as an area to improve.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils have greater opportunity to develop subject-specific skills in subjects other than English and mathematics
- the skills of subject leaders are developed effectively to enable them to bring about improvement in their areas of responsibility.

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

Yours sincerely

Cassandra Williams  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

- At the start of the inspection, we discussed the key lines of enquiry, the school's internal evaluation of its performance, plans for future improvement and information about current pupils' learning.
- Documents, including the school's evaluation of its own performance and the school improvement plans, were evaluated.
- The school's safeguarding arrangements, records, files and documentation were examined. Discussions were held with the safeguarding leaders.
- Together, we observed pupils' learning in all classes. We looked at samples of pupils' work in each class to evaluate the progress pupils are making over time.
- I spoke informally with pupils during lessons regarding their learning. I also met with a group of pupils.
- I met with the vice-chair of governors and two other governors.
- I talked to your school improvement adviser.
- The views of the 131 parents who responded to Parent View, the 47 staff who completed Ofsted's staff questionnaire and the 233 pupils who completed the online pupil questionnaire were taken into account. I considered 108 parental comments from the free-text service available during the inspection.