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Mrs Pamela Matty
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Dear Mrs Matty

Short inspection of Grove School

Following my visit to the school on 16 May 2018 with Amarjit Cheema, Ofsted Inspector, 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 September 2014.

This school continues to be good.

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

You have served as the school's headteacher for some considerable time. During this period, you have developed and refined many systems that contribute to the smooth and effective running of this very large school. You and other leaders have high expectations about pupils' achievement, and you communicate these clearly to everyone. Consequently, teachers and pupils alike know what is expected of them and strive to succeed in their endeavours. You have established a positive culture of learning and ambition, where pupils behave well and enjoy their school experiences.

Leaders remain continually reflective about the school's work and the impact of teaching on learning. You work closely and collaboratively with others to implement, develop and embed different strategies to meet the needs of pupils effectively. You have confidence in your leadership team to innovate and take ownership for different aspects of school improvement. They do this well. Leaders have been particularly successful in organising ways to share best practice across the school. For example, staff engage in 'trios' and 'quartets' coaching sessions, watching and learning from one another. This makes a real difference to refining the quality of teaching and contributes well to improving pupils' outcomes.

You place great emphasis on ensuring that pupils experience exciting learning opportunities, which motivate and prepare them well for their futures. This varied

curriculum enthuses pupils and gives them an appetite for learning. It contributes strongly to their good progress across a range of curriculum subjects. Teachers ensure that classrooms are calm places where learning is well organised, and pupils remain very focused on the task in hand. Staff have created an attractive learning environment, which is purposeful and where pupils' work is displayed and celebrated. Some marvellous artwork is displayed in upper key stage 2, which gives visitors a flavour of the breadth of the curriculum. Annually, the school enters a significant number of Year 6 pupils for GCSE mathematics. Impressively, in 2017, of all those entered, the large majority were awarded a grade 5, which is a good pass grade.

Leaders closely monitor the quality of teaching. When concerns are identified, they are quickly addressed so as to minimise any adverse effect on pupils' learning. As a result, teaching remains typically good across the school and pupils usually achieve well. However, there was a drop in the proportion of pupils achieving in the Year 1 phonics screening check, and end of key stage 1 reading and writing attainment also fell in 2017. You understood the reasons for this, which included pupils' high mobility, and without delay put in place appropriate measures to resolve any shortcomings in teaching. The school's current progress information shows that key stage 1 pupils are catching up. However, you acknowledge that there are still some refinements to the teaching of phonics necessary for teaching to be consistently strong.

Generally, you have made good progress in addressing the issues that were identified at the time of the last inspection. Teachers' questioning is more effective and encourages pupils to explore their thinking. This helps them to deepen their learning. Evidence from work in books shows that, in the majority of cases, pupils are provided with well-planned activities and suitably challenging work.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding is central to all aspects of the school's work and leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Keeping pupils safe from harm is at the forefront of everyone's mind. This is because staff receive regular, comprehensive training about a host of safeguarding matters. They understand the importance of what they have learned and apply it to their practice. Staff remain vigilant and take prompt action if they have any concerns about a pupil's welfare. Leaders work well with other agencies to provide the necessary support to pupils and their families.

Pupils say that they feel safe in school and are safe. Pupils have a good knowledge of keeping themselves safe because they are taught well about different aspects of personal safety. For example, they talk confidently about how to stay safe when using social media and have a good knowledge of road safety.

Inspection findings

- Pupils are excited about, and enjoy, reading. They read for pleasure and show a good knowledge of books and authors. Leaders' concerted efforts to encourage pupils to read more widely and often have paid dividends. There is an abundance

of planned activities to encourage a love of reading. Attractive classroom book areas, a well-stocked inviting school library, author visits, pupils' online book reviews and book fairs are just a few of the ongoing events that draw pupils into reading. Inspectors observed a well-attended reading workshop for parents and carers. Feedback from parents was very positive and demonstrated how successful teachers are in building strong links between home and school, helping everyone to understand the importance of reading.

- For the last few years, the progress of the most able readers by the end of key stage 2 has been below the national average. Teachers have used pupils' assessment information well to understand why this has been the case. They have adapted their teaching programmes accordingly to target reading skills where pupils are less confident. Current pupils' work and the school's internal assessment information show that these previous issues have been addressed and the most able pupils are now achieving well.
- For the last two years, the proportion of pupils passing the Year 1 phonics screening check has been below the national average. Leaders recognise that this was due to a lack of consistency in staff following the school's agreed phonics scheme. At the end of the last academic year, leaders took rapid action to ensure that this issue was resolved. Staff have benefited from additional training, and now all teachers follow the agreed programme of phonics work. Consequently, the teaching of phonics has improved, and current pupils make better progress. However, pupils' success in phonics is not as strong as it could be because the reading books they take home to practise do not match well to the school's chosen phonics scheme.
- Lower-attaining pupils make good progress in their reading because of effective additional support. The school's 'reading champions' project is successful in encouraging these pupils to read regularly and develop their confidence. Teachers' assessment of reading is rigorous, and the findings are used to inform their future teaching plans. Occasionally, the support of a few teaching assistants is less effective because they have lower expectations and underestimate what pupils can do.
- Pupils' attendance is just below the national average, and this has been the case for some time. The school's persistent absence rate was almost double the national average in 2017. Leaders track pupils' attendance carefully and put in place support if it falls short of the mark. The school also celebrates pupils' good attendance with various rewards. Leaders take more strident action when, despite reminders and support, parents fail to ensure that their children attend school regularly. Attendance meetings with families and the issuing of penalty notices are some of the courses of action taken. These strategies are proving effective. Overall attendance is gradually improving and the persistent absence rate is falling.
- Pupils demonstrate a strong sense of responsibility. They behave well in and out of the classroom and are confident and well-mannered. They speak positively about their learning and value the many exciting opportunities that enable them to develop into well-rounded pupils who make an active contribution to society. In response to very infrequent serious misbehaviour, the headteacher uses

exclusion as a last resort, after exhausting all other avenues of support. The exclusion rate has been higher than the national average in the past, particularly in relation to some vulnerable groups. However, earlier intervention and support for pupils has meant that the number of exclusions has noticeably reduced.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- Pupils are provided with reading books that are carefully matched to the phonics skills they are learning, so they can put their skills into practice more regularly
- All teaching assistants with responsibility for teaching phonics share the same high expectations as teachers.

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

Yours sincerely

Tim Hill

Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and other senior leaders to discuss the school's self-evaluation and its current priorities. I also met with three governors, including the chair of the governing body. Another inspector met with a member of staff with responsibility for safeguarding. There were insufficient responses from Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, but I considered the three free-text comments that arrived during the inspection. An inspector also spoke to parents at the start of the school day. I considered the 37 staff responses to Ofsted's questionnaire and the 317 responses from pupils. Inspectors observed, jointly with leaders, learning in lessons across key stages 1 and 2. We reviewed pupils' work, focusing mainly on reading. We observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and at breaktime. Inspectors met with pupils to hear their views on school, including their reading habits, and heard several pupils read. Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents, including the school's development plan, evaluations of teaching and learning, the school's self-evaluation, governors' documentation, and safeguarding information. I also examined the school's website.