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Mr J Robertson
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Robertson

Short inspection of Great Orton Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 23 May 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.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

You are working hard to address the effects of past staffing instability that has had a negative impact on pupils' outcomes. With your support, and that of governors, teachers are developing their skills and subject leaders are increasing their ability to address whole-school improvement priorities.

Under the guidance of the new chair of governors, the governing body has reorganised and undertaken training to develop its effectiveness further. As a consequence, governors know the school well, have a broad range of skills and offer a wide range of support to improve the school. One governor, reflecting the view of this dedicated and committed team, noted, 'We care passionately about the school and the children.'

The vast majority of parents and carers who communicated their feelings to the inspection team were supportive of the school. The most recent parental survey provided by leaders reflects the same level of support. One parent, reflecting the views of many, noted: 'The teachers really care for the children and that is evident at all times. There is always a warm welcome at Great Orton.'

Following the last inspection, inspectors asked leaders to provide harder work to challenge pupils when they find the work too easy. Some progress has been made

in this area. Leaders track the achievement of all pupils and have introduced a new system in literacy and mathematics which ensures that pupils are set specific learning outcomes and success criteria in each lesson. During the inspection, I saw the positive impact of these changes on the level of the work that pupils now undertake. However, your own evaluation highlights the fact that further work is required in this area to ensure that staff challenge the most able pupils more consistently throughout the school. This lack of consistency was also noted during the inspection when I examined pupils' books.

Additionally, leaders were asked to speed up the rate of pupils' progress in mathematics by ensuring that there are enough opportunities across different subjects for pupils to practise applying their numeracy skills. You explained that you have increased the range of opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical skills in different subjects. Despite this, the evidence gathered during the inspection clearly indicates that the teaching of mathematics does not provide pupils with the routine levels of challenge that are necessary for them to make strong progress in terms of the development of their mathematical reasoning skills. As a result, the impact of your work to develop pupils' numeracy skills across the curriculum is undermined by weaknesses in the teaching of mathematics.

During the inspection, we considered areas where further work is required to support your efforts to improve the school. You are aware that the design of the curriculum, especially in key stage 2, does not fulfil all of the requirements of the national curriculum in each subject which should be taught. Furthermore, the curriculum does not ensure that there is sufficient focus on the skills that pupils should develop from one year group to the next. This was most notable in the area of personal, social and health education. Additionally, teachers do not consistently plan effectively for the development of pupils' reading and mathematical skills. Consequently, the teaching of these important skills often lacks challenge, particularly for the most able pupils.

Finally, the school website does not contain all the statutory information which enables parents to understand different aspects of their children's school life.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team ensures that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Your school building is secure and staff are thorough in checking visitors' identity on entry. Visitors are provided with identity badges with safeguarding information on the back. Information on fire safety is on display in the building.

Leaders and governors make thorough checks when recruiting new members of staff. Governors and staff receive appropriate training relating to safeguarding and are clear on the procedures to follow if a pupil needs help.

The majority of the pupils who responded to the online survey said that they feel safe in school and that their school encourages them to look after their physical health.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection I shared with you a number of lines of enquiry. The first considered the progress made by pupils in mathematics throughout the school. This was an area for improvement identified at your school's previous inspection. Pupils' progress in mathematics across the school remains an area of concern. Leaders' monitoring of teaching and learning in mathematics shows that teachers are not always providing appropriate levels of challenge for pupils in lessons. For example, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to develop their mathematical problem-solving and reasoning skills. You have enabled some members of staff to undertake training to develop their skills in this area. Nevertheless, while there has been some improvement, this is not consistent throughout the school and you are aware that a whole-school approach to developing pupils' mathematical reasoning skills is required. The most able mathematicians, in particular, are not challenged sufficiently or systematically.
- We also looked at how effectively reading is being taught throughout the school. Your new subject leader is working closely with a leader from a neighbouring school to explore ways in which this subject can be taught more effectively. Leaders have also ensured that new resources have been purchased which support teachers in teaching specific reading skills. As a consequence, some progress is being made in this area and there are clear signs that the teaching of reading is improving for some pupils. For example, in the upper key stage 2 class, I observed pupils being challenged effectively to consider complex meanings in a classical narrative poem while other pupils were comparing and contrasting this poem to other shorter classical works. In this way, pupils' reading skills were developed well. However, despite some improvement, the teaching of reading skills is not consistently good across the school. Too often, pupils are not challenged sufficiently to make the fast progress they are capable of making. This is particularly true in relation to the most able pupils.
- My next line of enquiry considered what leaders are doing to ensure high standards of personal development, behaviour and welfare in the school. You have worked hard to reduce the number of pupils who are absent from school. You follow up absences quickly and maintain contact with parents to ensure that pupils return to school as soon as possible after an absence. You also provide rewards to pupils as incentives for good attendance. A trophy is awarded to the class with the highest attendance at the end of the school year. As a consequence of these actions, attendance rates are improving and are now broadly in line with national averages.
- During the inspection I spoke with pupils about their views on personal development, behaviour and welfare. A number raised concerns about pupils' behaviour towards each other. Pupils noted that other children could be unnecessarily unkind on occasions. This view was reinforced in the pupils' survey, undertaken prior to the inspection, where some pupils raised concerns about the issue of bullying. I discussed this with you and we agreed that the personal, social and health education programme does not develop well enough pupils'

awareness of how to build positive relationships.

- You are working with your new governing body to amend and update your school website. Much work has been done in this area. However, it is not yet complete. For example, it does not contain the necessary information on the content of the curriculum.
- Finally, we looked in detail at the content of your curriculum. We identified a number of weaknesses in relation to the design and implementation of the curriculum. Firstly, the curriculum does not outline how children in the Reception class are to develop their understanding of mathematics and reading in the outdoor learning area. Secondly, the curriculum does not identify specifically what content and skills are to be developed in key stage 2. As a result, teachers are not given enough guidance to ensure that their teaching provides sufficient levels of challenge for groups of pupils in different subjects. Weak curriculum planning therefore links directly to the weaknesses in teaching that were identified during the inspection.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- curriculum plans are more detailed to ensure that the requirements of the national curriculum are fulfilled and that there is a clear focus on the development of skills in all subjects
- the teaching of personal, social and health education is strengthened so pupils have a clearer age-appropriate understanding of what constitutes healthy relationships
- appropriate support and training is provided for all teachers and support staff to ensure that the planning and teaching of reading and mathematics challenges all ability groups, particularly the most able
- curriculum planning for the outdoor provision in the Reception/Year 1 class is developed further to promote additional learning opportunities, most notably in reading and mathematics
- the new website is updated to include all statutory information required by the Department for Education.

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

Yours sincerely

Gill Pritchard
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you to discuss issues relating to safeguarding and to school improvement. I also met with five governors, including the chair of the governing body. I spoke with the school's administration officer about staff recruitment procedures. I met with subject leaders to discuss pupils' current performance in the school. I also met with the school's local authority advisor. I had a formal discussion with a group of pupils and joined them on a tour around the school grounds.

Accompanied by you, I visited all classes across the school. I observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and as they moved around the school. I scrutinised examples of pupils' work and reviewed documents, including your record of checks on the suitability of staff and volunteers to work with children. I also examined the school's self-evaluation, improvement plans, curriculum documentation and current performance information. I took account of a recent parental survey conducted by the school, six responses to the staff survey, six comments made by parents via Ofsted's free-text facility and 13 responses to the pupil survey. There were not enough responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online parental survey, to be significant. I also considered information posted on the school's website.