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Dear Miss Esom

### **Short inspection of Markyate Village School and Nursery**

Following my visit to the school on 1 March 2016, 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 November 2010.

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

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

During my visit, I spoke with many parents and pupils. They were adamant that, with the support of staff and governors, you are ensuring that pupils enjoy their learning, are safe at school and are well prepared for the next stage of their education. The Year 6 pupils were eager to move on to their new secondary school. They felt ready and confident. Pupils listed many things that, in their opinion, made the school 'so good' and 'really friendly'. They particularly like their teachers because they make learning fun. Pupils are enthusiastic about what they are learning in class. They also love their music, clubs, sports and physical education. They are thrilled about the collection of team points and about the many ways they have to shine at celebration events and through their charity work. A few parents raised concerns about homework but pupils said that it helped them improve and that it was 'actually interesting'. I specifically checked the homework journals across all years. I found that the work provides opportunities for pupils to be creative. It also reinforces what pupils have learned at school and encourages them to apply their learning to different contexts.

Pupils clearly explained why bullying is not tolerated at their school, naming the specific value of each class and the school's motto 'Dream-Believe-Succeed' to exemplify their point. With the support of staff, you ensure the highest levels of

care and welfare to promote the well-being of all pupils. The youngest children settle well in Nursery and Reception. Routines are reinforced sensitively. I observed children in the Nursery class walking to their music lesson in a very orderly fashion. A good example of your inclusive approach is the way pupils who have special educational needs or disability are given every opportunity to join in whole-school activities. One parent told me that the school was going the extra mile to help her child. The newly appointed inclusion coordinator is quickly getting to grips with systems and processes. More now needs to be done to check the effectiveness of all additional support so that progress is the best it can be across classes and subjects.

You were appointed after the 2010 inspection of the school and quickly developed your own style of leadership. You have a clear vision for the future development of the school. Strengths of your leadership are:

- the accurate monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning
- the actions taken where pupils' progress is not as good as it should be
- the joint sharing of expertise with local outstanding schools
- the robust tracking of achievement through pupils' progress meetings
- your commitment to taking account of what pupils, parents and carers say and subsequently acting on their suggestions to improve the school further.

With the help of your two acting deputy headteachers and governors, you are maintaining the strengths of the school and are identifying where further improvement might be achieved. Staff understand and apply the school's assessment and marking policy effectively. There are good examples of pupils improving their work as a result, but subject leaders need to check that this is happening across subjects, not just in English and mathematics. You took prompt action to increase pupils' progress in reading and mathematics following the dip in results in 2015. You appreciate the support of the local authority advisers, and staff are acting on their recommendations. Current pupils are doing better in these two subjects, although you acknowledge that further consolidation is required in mathematics. You have successfully addressed the areas identified as being in need of further improvement at your previous Ofsted inspection. You have also improved outdoor provision, sustained above-average attendance and managed the challenges of the new-build programme to meet the increasing demand for school places in the area.

A very high proportion of parents expressed their views through Parent View (Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents) and a further 67 sent me additional comments. Almost all were very positive, particularly about the good progress their children are making. This visit confirms that pupils make good progress at the school, although, in some classes, it is not rapid enough across subjects, particularly for the most-able pupils.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Safeguarding arrangements are robust. Staff are fully aware of what to do if there is a safeguarding concern. You ensure that all staff and governors have relevant

and up-to-date training. The school works well with external agencies to secure effective support for pupils. Your inclusion team deals with sensitive matters exceptionally well and goes the extra mile to ensure that families in need of intensive support are helped so that their children's education does not suffer at times of crisis. You explained the robust way in which you are reporting any incident of children missing education to the local authority. Your office staff check pupils' absence promptly.

A very small number of parents are worried about bullying and about communications between them and the school. Records show that bullying is rare and parents are kept well informed of actions taken following incidents. Pupils said that they can speak to an adult if they are worried and they will get help. Families are often invited to school events, staff are visible around the school and the website is informative. Parents evenings, pupils' termly progress reports and specific workshops provide further opportunities for parents to liaise with the school. The e-safety workshop on the day of my visit was well attended and parents said it was very helpful.

### **Inspection findings**

- The positive ethos and strong team work that you have established support your aim to make the school outstanding. Teachers must now develop their expertise further to ensure that teaching and learning are of the highest quality across all subjects and classes.
- The positive impact of your leadership is particularly visible in the way you listen to pupils and families to meet their needs as best you can. You improved the punctuality of the small number of pupils who were often late to school at the beginning of the academic year. There is evidence of the impact of the effective actions you are taking to raise standards in reading and mathematics.
- Governors are holding the school to account. Minutes of meetings show that they offer support and do not shy away from robust challenge where it is needed. They use assessment information well to improve outcomes, although subject reports for governors focus too much on resources and planning and not enough on the impact of teaching and assessment on pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding.
- You have set clear actions to make sure that pupils' outcomes are at least at the national expectation as soon as possible. Children in the Nursery and Reception get off to a flying start and the proportion reaching a good level of development by the end of the Reception year has increased over the past three years to above average in 2015.
- You rightly want to consolidate the transition between Reception and Year 1 because results in the phonics checks are fluctuating. As the school is growing, staff are getting used to managing a larger cohort of pupils more effectively. They are working hard to review their planning so that topics build more quickly on pupils' skills and understanding. They need to check that the work is pitched at the right level, particularly for pupils who have the potential to achieve highly. In 2015, not enough pupils reached the highest levels in reading and mathematics.

- Pupils' progress is uneven at Key Stage 2 and more rapid as pupils get older. You have split Year 6 into two small classes to ensure that pupils get better support. This is working well and current pupils, particularly the most able, are making rapid progress. In Year 5 they were seen doing some challenging work in mathematics. Concentration was high. One pupil said that 'he might have outstretched himself too much'. This effective practice requires sharing in all classes and subjects.
- Pupils respond very positively to the high expectations for conduct around the school and for learning in class. Bullying is rare and taken very seriously. Pupils want to attend school. They are very keen to take on responsibilities. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength.
- You participate in, and benefit from, a wide range of networks. The local authority is rightly complimentary about your leadership and about the way you volunteer to take part in key projects, such as the 'Improving Progress in Maths' and the 'Champions for Excellence' initiatives. You are involved in moderating pupils' work alongside other schools to check that assessment is accurate. You are not complacent and are working well with a local outstanding school to share good practice.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the effectiveness of additional support for pupils who have special educational needs or disability is evaluated to maximise its impact on progress and achievement
- subject leaders evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of teaching, learning and assessment to accelerate the progress of pupils, particularly the most able, across subjects.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for Hertfordshire County Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Marianick Ellender-Gelé  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with you, your senior leaders and five governors including the Chair of the Governing Body. I also met a local authority representative. I met a group of pupils and spoke with many during break and lunchtime and in class. We visited all year groups together and I checked your evaluation of teaching and learning. I looked at pupils' work and talked to them about their learning. I analysed recent assessment information about pupils'

progress. I reviewed records and procedures about keeping pupils safe and about attendance. I read case studies of families in receipt of welfare support. I considered the views of 146 parents from Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and took account of 67 additional comments from parents and carers. I also spoke to many parents at the beginning of the school day. I attended the e-safety workshop for parents at the end of the school day.