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Mrs Karen Martin
The Grove Primary School
Campkin Road
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Dear Mrs Martin

Short inspection of The Grove Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 25 January 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 February 2013.

This school continues to be good.

Leaders have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You are working appropriately on the areas identified at the previous inspection. A new deputy headteacher joined the school in September 2015, and in partnership you have set about raising aspirations, improving the systems in place for monitoring the progress of pupils and ensuring greater support is given to those pupils at risk of falling behind in their studies. You have a close working partnership with the governing body. Governors hold you to account well and regularly visit the school to check how it is doing and ensure that there is no complacency.

Progress in writing is good and the current performance of pupils in key stage 2 is in line with the national expectations. An effective system has been put in place to support teachers so that they can continue to improve teaching.

The English and mathematics leaders have a good understanding of how to continue improving their subjects and they provide useful feedback to staff following lesson observations, when looking at pupils' books and in discussions with pupils.

In July 2016, the school's key stage 2 results were very disappointing in reading and mathematics. These came as a surprise to the school because teachers' assessments indicated that pupils were achieving at national averages in all subjects. Your response to these results has been effective.

Most teaching is now characterised by high expectations, good questioning, good subject knowledge and a positive classroom atmosphere. As a result, pupils work hard and enjoy their lessons. A detailed look at pupils' books showed that a large majority are now working at age-related expectations or above. You have identified teaching that needs to improve further and you have put support plans in place to secure the necessary improvements.

Parents are pleased with the school. I spoke to several parents in the playground and looked carefully at the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. Parents spoke about the welcoming nature of the school and the caring teachers. They talked about the clearly explained behaviour system and that learning was interesting. Parents of Reception class children commented on the strong focus on early reading and mathematics. As a result of this strong emphasis, along with a well-planned learning environment, children make good progress from their different starting points in the early years.

Pupils' behaviour is managed well. In class, pupils concentrate well and show considerable pride in their work. Their level of effort is high and the presentation in books is good. On occasion, a small proportion of pupils find it hard to concentrate in class, but teachers and support staff act quickly and sensitively to ensure that appropriate support is given so that everyone can get back to work quickly.

Safeguarding is effective

Leaders at all levels have successfully established a strong culture of safeguarding. You and the three other designated leaders for safeguarding have ensured that all staff are fully trained and have a good understanding of what they should do if they have concerns about a pupil. Leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Record-keeping is meticulous and this ensures that leaders are aware of the wider circumstances of each pupil. Leaders take rapid action when they are concerned for a pupil and work closely with external agencies to take the appropriate actions. Regular meetings take place between the key personnel in school to review how well vulnerable pupils are doing and if there are any further ways they can be supported. This helps to keep pupils safe and stops issues escalating unnecessarily.

Pupils feel safe in school and their parents agree. Discussions with pupils showed that they know they have someone they can talk to if they are worried. They said that all the teachers care for them. There is a well-planned curriculum to support pupils in knowing how to be safe, which includes understanding the potential dangers of using the internet.

Inspection findings

- To ascertain that the school remains good, one of my key lines of enquiry was about reading. Year 6 national assessment results in 2016 placed the school in the bottom 10% nationally for reading. Detailed analysis of all pupils' work and test responses was carried out. Staff identified that in reading pupils did not have the stamina to read at pace. In addition, the quality of vocabulary used by pupils needed to improve, and more pupils needed increased opportunities to work independently and for sustained periods of time. You have set about improving these aspects of teaching. Progress in reading is now good and the standards of pupils' work are broadly in line with age-related expectations. This is a result of the actions taken by leadership and the effective teaching, as well as the range of catch-up and support programmes put in place.
- My second line of enquiry was about mathematics. Key stage 2 results in mathematics in 2016 were below average. This was because the school did not respond sharply enough to the new national curriculum and its higher expectations. As a result, pupils were not as proficient as they should have been in the areas of mathematical reasoning and problem solving. This year, a new curriculum has been put in place and the subject leader is involved in regular monitoring of planning, teaching and assessment. The rapid and decisive actions taken by the leadership team mean that the standard of work has improved and pupils are much better prepared to reach the requirements of the new, higher expectations.
- Leaders have put in place strategies such as harnessing expertise from external agents to improve the quality of teaching in mathematics. This has resulted in acceleration of pupils' progress since September 2016. In addition, the quality of questioning has improved so that pupils are given the chance to think about mathematical concepts more fully. Teachers respond to pupils' errors by providing additional support. The principles of the new curriculum have been fully adopted so that pupils are given many more opportunities to develop mathematical reasoning and problem solving. As a result, progress in mathematics has accelerated across the school and in Years 5 and 6, where teaching is particularly effective, all groups of pupils are now making rapid progress.
- Leaders recognise that more needs to be done to improve the progress of the most able pupils and to ensure that their work is suitably challenging, particularly in mathematics. This was another area of focus for the inspection.
- My fourth line of enquiry was about disadvantaged pupils. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils within each class is generally higher than average. The progress of disadvantaged pupils has accelerated since September because the use of the pupil premium funding is effective. Strategies to support the most able disadvantaged pupils are beginning to bear fruit. Effective intervention plans are in place to support all pupils in this group and these are rigorously monitored to ensure that the progress of disadvantaged pupils is now close to that of others nationally.
- Finally I looked at attendance. The school is vigilant in monitoring pupils'

absence and has been successful in improving the overall level of attendance and in reducing the number of pupils who are persistently absent. Despite these improvements, the school's attendance remains below average. Further work needs to be done to ensure that pupils' attendance continues to improve.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- plans to improve weaker teaching are effective
- the progress of the most able pupils is supported more effectively so that a greater proportion are working at greater depth by the end of Year 6 in mathematics
- strategies to improve attendance are successful in reducing absence.

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

Yours sincerely

Duncan Ramsey
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

The school meets the Department for Education's definition of a coasting school based on key stage 2 academic performance results in 2014, 2015 and 2016.

During the inspection, I met with you, the deputy headteacher, subject leaders for English and mathematics, the pupil premium champion, a group of three governors and parents on the playground at the start of the day. I reviewed safeguarding procedures and policies. I observed teaching in a range of classes jointly with the headteacher. I considered the views of parents posted on Parent View. In addition, I considered a range of school documents which included the school's self-evaluation, the school development plan, action plans for improving reading and mathematics, the pupil premium reports and pupils' progress information for all classes. I spoke to pupils about their learning and looked closely at the work in pupils' books.