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Mrs Catherine Cooke
Headteacher
Gorse Covert Primary School
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Dear Mrs Cooke

Short inspection of Gorse Covert Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 4 July 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 July 2012.

This school continues to be good

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

There have been very few staff changes at the school since the previous inspection. In 2012, many of your team, including you, were relatively new to Gorse Covert. Since then you have all grown in experience and expertise, working together to improve the school.

You have earned the respect of your colleagues, both in school and across the local authority. Together with your deputy headteacher, you have used a wealth of information to give you an accurate view of the school's performance. This has helped you to put together a well-considered improvement plan.

You make sure that your staff have the training and support to do their jobs well. You have all benefited from your involvement in the local schools' improvement alliance. Teachers enjoy the opportunities to attend subject leader meetings, visit other schools and learn from leading educationalists. You encourage your staff to follow their interests and enthusiasms. You listen to their ideas and allow them to put these ideas to the test if you think they will benefit your pupils.

Pupils look forward to coming to school. They get on well with their teachers and classmates. They are articulate, polite and respectful. The youngest children settle

quickly when they join the school. The oldest pupils are well prepared for their move to high school.

Since the previous inspection, middle leadership has gone from strength to strength. Your middle leaders have stepped up to the mark. They make sure they capitalise on the time and resources they are given to manage their subject areas. Regular checks on pupils' books, observations of teaching and oversight of assessment information keep them informed about how well pupils are doing. They use this information effectively to develop and review their action plans. Governors keep a close eye on middle leaders' work. Governors use subject leaders' regular reports as well as face-to-face meetings to hold these leaders to account. Consequently, middle leaders are making a positive impact on pupil performance across the curriculum. For example, your physical education lead identified pupils who were not taking part in any sports clubs. He has encouraged them to join a club run by their peers which promotes healthy lifestyle choices.

You and your colleagues have worked hard to improve pupils' outcomes since the previous inspection. Your English and mathematics subject leads have made sure that staff have received comprehensive training and support. Consequently, teachers are confident in delivering the new curriculum. Your teachers are identifying pupils' next steps in learning. This is particularly well done in writing lessons. Pupils told me that they find their teachers' feedback helpful in improving their work. Pupils enjoy grappling with tricky problems in mathematics and rising to the writing challenges. Teachers make sure that pupils work hard in their lessons. Pupils enjoy learning. They listen attentively to their teachers, settle quickly to tasks and persevere when they are finding things hard. As a result, lessons proceed at a brisk pace.

Following the previous inspection, you sought specialist advice and guidance to help you improve the outdoor provision for your youngest children. Since then, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development has increased considerably. Children make good progress from their different starting points across almost all aspects of the early years foundation stage. Quite rightly, you continue to focus on raising achievement at key stage 1 further. We discussed plans to strengthen children's foundations in literacy and mathematics at the end of early years to help accelerate progress across key stage 1.

Safeguarding is effective

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Leaders carry out rigorous checks to make sure that all staff are suitable to work with children. Staff attend regular training so that they understand the possible risks to children and what they must do if they have any concerns. The headteacher keeps a watchful eye on pupils, making sure that she records and reports any concerns. The school works closely with external partners to give the most vulnerable pupils and their families the support they need. Teachers make sure that pupils know how to keep themselves safe, particularly when using social media and playing games online. Pupils are adamant that any very rare incidents of

bullying are dealt with swiftly and effectively by teachers. Staff, parents and pupils agree that pupils are safe and well cared-for.

Inspection findings

- Your pupils enjoy coming to school. Almost all pupils attend school on time, every day. However, there has been a decrease in the attendance rate year-on-year. You have taken effective action to arrest this decline, so that your attendance remains above the national average. Together with your clerical officer, you monitor the attendance of identified pupils on a weekly basis. You follow up assiduously on any unexplained absence. You make good use of the pupil premium funding to support eligible pupils whose families are struggling to get them to school.
- The governing body is 'as keen as mustard'. Governors are highly aspirational for the school, its pupils and staff. They ensure that they are well informed about different aspects of the school's work, using a range of information. Governors work well with senior and middle leaders. They make frequent visits to school to find out first-hand how well the school is doing. While governors offer well-considered advice and guidance, they do not shy away from having challenging conversations when needed.
- Teachers make sure that pupils are well prepared for their next steps in high school and beyond. Year 6 teachers work well with their high school colleagues to smooth the transition between Year 6 and Year 7. Year 6 pupils appreciate the opportunities to share their anxieties and value the advice they are given. The e-safety lead makes sure that he 'keeps his ear to the ground'. He makes sure that pupils and their parents are alert to potential risks, particularly with the use of social media. Teachers help pupils to understand what makes a healthy relationship and to learn about the different families which make up our society. Older pupils enjoy taking on responsibilities, including being reading buddies and house captains.
- Leaders and governors are committed to developing the 'whole child'. The regular 'house days' provide pupils with a wealth of opportunities to work in mixed-age groups, exploring a diverse range of themes including disability, commonwealth and World War 1. Pupils enjoy the after-school and lunchtime clubs. During my visit, younger pupils were taking part enthusiastically in zumbatomics. Pupils are proud to represent the school in sports matches and tournaments. Most recently, school teams have had success in cricket, cross country, netball and football.
- Parents are an intrinsic part of the life of the school. Pupils appreciate the contribution of the parent teacher association to the regular discos and annual leavers' party. Teachers appreciate parents' willingness to support their children at home. Parents are keen to find out how to help, for example, by attending phonics, mathematics and assessment workshops. A number of your parents take their involvement in school life even further, volunteering in school or joining the governing body.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that the provision for literacy and mathematics in early years prepares children even better for their transition into key stage 1.

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

Yours sincerely

Pippa Jackson Maitland
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

- The inspector met with senior leaders, the chair, vice chair and members of the governing body.
- The inspector also spoke to a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector considered the 56 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View.
- The inspector met formally with a group of staff and considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey of staff.
- The inspector visited classrooms to observe pupils' learning and check pupils' work in books.
- The inspector looked at information about pupils' progress and attainment, the school's self-evaluation and action plan as well as a range of other documentation.
- The inspector conducted a review of safeguarding, including an evaluation of the school's policies and procedures to keep pupils safe, training records, recruitment checks and record-keeping.