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6 September 2017

Michael Cooke  
Headteacher  
Plymouth Grove Primary School  
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Dear Mr Cooke

### **Short inspection of Plymouth Grove Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 12 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 November 2011.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education since the last inspection. As headteacher, you have established a committed leadership team that is full of energy and enthusiasm. You are very well supported by your deputy headteacher. Staff and governors share your drive to overcome the challenges faced by many of your pupils, and their families, within the richly diverse community the school serves. You are constantly reflecting on how to improve the school for your pupils. There is a strong culture of professional dialogue, support and challenge between staff. You work closely with other schools in the local area to share resources and training opportunities for staff. This has resulted in improvement in the quality of teaching within school.

You and your staff have also worked effectively to address the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Attendance continues to improve. The majority of pupils attend school as regularly as other pupils nationally. However, you acknowledge that there is still a need to ensure that the number of pupils who are regularly absent from school continues to reduce.

With regard to how well pupils achieve, the published assessment information for your school has to be read with caution. This is because it includes the assessments for pupils who have only recently arrived into the country. Outcomes for pupils are good and improving. However, not enough pupils are working at a greater depth, particularly in writing.

An overwhelming majority of parents spoken to during the inspection, and those who accessed Parent View, commented positively about the care that you give to their children. Parents appreciate the quality of homework that teachers set. They are also positive about the information that they receive about their child's learning. A number of parents who have recently moved to the area said that staff have made them feel very welcome and part of the community. Parents of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities speak highly of the support that they have received from your staff. Added to this, parents are pleased with the progress that their children make. Parents also appreciate the time that you give to them to listen to their concerns.

Pupils enjoy coming to school. They appreciate the many opportunities that you provide to enrich and enhance their learning. Those spoken to during the inspection were enthusiastic about their forthcoming performance at the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester. They also spoke with passion about winning the local debating competition across the North West. Pupils enjoy the wide range of clubs and after-school activities, especially science, drama and coding club. Pupils have a strong sense of respect for each other and the world around them. When asked what made Plymouth Grove so special, a pupil said, 'The rule of our school is that everyone is equal and has equal rights. We are very different. We come from different countries and religions. There is something for everyone here.'

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are effective. Staff follow procedures appropriately and any concerns are followed up rigorously. Records are detailed and of a high quality. Pupils spoken to during the inspection say that they know how to keep themselves safe, especially when using the internet. Pupils appreciate the roles played by all adults in school to keep them safe. Pupils say that if you are worried about anything there is always someone to talk to in school. They are confident that things will be dealt with swiftly.

### **Inspection findings**

- During the inspection I focused on the attendance of pupils. You have been relentless in your drive to improve punctuality and attendance, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. You are committed to ensuring that the most vulnerable pupils are well supported. For example, your family support staff work closely with these pupils and their families. You also work closely with a number of outside agencies and leaders robustly follow up when pupils are absent and parents are held to account. You have introduced a number of creative incentives which have had a positive impact on improving attendance. However, there remain a small number of pupils whose complex needs, and family circumstances, have resulted in them having considerable absences. This remains a focus for improvement.
- My second focus for the inspection was to consider the strength of phonics teaching. I also wanted to consider the reasons behind the dip in the proportion of pupils meeting the expected standard in phonics at the end of Year 1 in 2016.

You and your leaders have accurately identified the specific reasons for the dip. For example, you have taken appropriate action to tackle the challenges faced by pupils who have only recently arrived in the country. The appointment of a specialist teacher for language and communication has enabled you to deliver high-quality training to your staff. It has also enabled you to share good practice with other schools. Leaders and staff provide a wide variety of support activities to meet the needs of this group of pupils. These include building pupils' confidence, supporting pupils' oral language skills and developing positive learning behaviours. Consequently, this group of pupils make good progress in phonics from their starting points when they first join the school. Phonics teaching is effective. The vast majority of pupils who attended the school Nursery and Reception class passed the phonics screening check in 2016.

- Teachers promote speaking skills when developing pupils' writing skills. Staff regularly reinforce pupils' phonics skills. As a result, pupils' ability to apply their phonic skills in their own writing is improving. The work in books, for the pupils who have attended the school for a sustained period of time, shows that they make strong progress from their starting points. The majority of familiar words are spelled correctly. Any misconceptions are corrected by the teacher and followed up in future pieces of work. Pupils are able to apply their writing skills across a range of other subjects including science. However, leaders acknowledge that they need to continue to develop pupils' spoken language in order to increase the proportion working at a greater depth, particularly in writing.
- Thirdly, I wanted to see how teachers build upon the progress made by children in the early years as they enter Year 1. Teaching in key stage 1 is strong. Work in pupils' books shows that pupils are challenged well and make good progress over time. Teachers successfully build on pupils' strong starting points from the end of Reception class. As a result, an increasing proportion of pupils who reach a good level of development at the end of Reception also attain the expected standard at the end of key stage 1.
- Leaders closely monitor the progress of all pupils, including new pupils who join the school within a school year. Consequently, leaders are able to ensure that pupils receive the appropriate support or challenge needed to enhance their learning. Observations during the inspection, and work in pupils' books, clearly show that activities accurately meet the needs of most pupils. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities benefit particularly well from this tailored support. Leaders' own assessment information shows that this group of pupils are typically making similar progress to other pupils nationally. The most able pupils are challenged effectively in lessons and enjoy the opportunities they are given to practise their skills, especially in mathematics. One pupil said, 'Learning my tables helps me to do problems with division as well.'
- Due to the high number of disadvantaged pupils in your school, I wanted to know how effectively the additional funding was being used to support their learning. You and your leaders have accurately identified the key barriers for learning. The well-targeted support allows disadvantaged pupils to catch up. Leaders check the impact of their actions to improve outcomes. They evaluate which strategies are successful and make changes where necessary. As a result,

pupils make good progress over time, particularly in mathematics and in spelling, punctuation and grammar. Consequently, the progress made by disadvantaged pupils by the end of key stage 2 is typically above that of other pupils nationally.

- Finally, I wanted to know how leaders ensure that the additional funds for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is used effectively. Governors employ leaders and staff who are highly knowledgeable and are able to meet the complex needs of pupils who have an education, health and care plan (EHC plan). You and your staff work closely with a range of agencies to ensure that support is of the highest quality for pupils and their families. Staff have opportunities to share good practice with other local schools and other professionals. Detailed records are kept by your staff. They demonstrate the positive impact of the support given to pupils who attend the resourced provision and to those pupils within the main school. Leaders accurately assess the next steps that are needed for each pupil who has special educational needs and/or disabilities. As a result, the needs of pupils are being met very well and these pupils make good progress from their individual starting points.
- Staff work well together across school, and with other schools, to share information. This ensures that pupils have a smooth transition on to the next stage of their education.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they tackle the persistent absence of a small number of pupils so that they attend school at least as regularly as other pupils nationally
- they continue to develop pupils' spoken language in order to increase the proportion of pupils working at a greater depth, particularly in writing.

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

Yours sincerely

Amanda Stringer  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During this short inspection, I met with you, your deputy headteacher and members of your leadership team. I also met three members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority. I conducted a learning walk with your deputy headteacher and I had the opportunity to speak to pupils and observe their work. I also heard a number of pupils read in lessons. I met with a group of pupils during the day and I spoke with several parents at the start of the school day. I

reviewed 51 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents. I scrutinised your assessment information, school improvement planning, the single central record and other safeguarding documentation, procedures and practices.