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Mr Guy Underwood  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Underwood

### **Short inspection of Great Abington Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 28 September 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 January 2013.

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

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

You are a strong and dynamic leader and have formed an effective team of staff. A strong governing body holds the school to account well. Where teaching has inconsistencies, these are picked up quickly and action taken. Last year, leaders successfully tackled weaknesses in teaching by making their expectations clear and checking closely to ensure that matters improved.

Standards at the end of key stage 2 have been well above average for the past two years. Progress in 2017 was above average in reading and mathematics and average in writing.

In 2017, standards in reading rose at the end of key stage 1 and are now above average, as are those in other subjects. Pupils do very well in phonics.

Small cohorts mean that performance information can fluctuate from year to year. In general, current pupils make good progress from their starting points and achieve well. The school tracks the progress of individual pupils carefully.

Pupils behave extremely well and have very positive attitudes to learning. They are enthusiastic in class and concentrate well on their work. They are polite and friendly

and care for one another.

Pupils know and practise the school's values consistently. These include resilience, confidence, motivation and respect. Older pupils support the younger ones. The school has the family feel of a village school, where everybody knows and helps each other. Pupils are well prepared for secondary school and, more widely, as good citizens, gaining a good understanding of fundamental British values.

Leaders provide an engaging curriculum that is tailored to pupils' needs well. For example, the Reception teacher finds out from parents what interests the new arrivals and makes sure that activities suit them. Pupils enjoy visits to places of interest to enhance their experiences. Recently, pupils visited the National Space Centre in Leicester as part of a space project. Pupils were very excited because they witnessed a live link to NASA in the United States. Pupils have also visited the Royal Opera House in London to see a production of the opera, 'Madam Butterfly'. They interviewed the opera singer who took the lead part via a live link.

We agreed that in science teachers' expectations of pupils are sometimes not as high as they are in English and mathematics. In particular, there are occasions when the most able pupils are not challenged sufficiently to think more deeply or respond more creatively than they could.

At the last inspection, leaders were asked to improve pupils' handwriting, spelling and punctuation. You accept that there is still work to do before pupils in all classes are secure in these skills. While there are examples of fluent handwriting and neat presentation, these are not consistent across the school. Similarly, there have been improvements in spelling and punctuation, but spelling rightly remains a focus of the school's plans for improvement. Leaders have introduced a new approach to spelling this year, and are checking its effectiveness.

Parents are universally positive about the work of the school. One commented, 'My son has made significant progress both academically and socially and is very happy.' Another said, 'I feel privileged that my children attend such a caring, happy, supportive and well-led school.'

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The school has effective systems and procedures in place to ensure that pupils stay safe. The school's website contains a wealth of useful information for parents and pupils on all aspects of safeguarding, including many interesting links. Staff are well trained, and the school's records of any concerns are kept carefully and up to date.

School staff work effectively with other agencies including social services and the police. They make regular checks on the well-being of all pupils for whom there have been any concerns in the past. In this way, staff pick up any changes very quickly and act where necessary to provide the support that may be required. Pupils have a very good understanding of how to keep safe and said that they feel safe in school. They find adults approachable and would go to them with any problems.

## Inspection findings

- In order to make sure that the school remains good, I identified a number of key lines of enquiry that we agreed at our initial meeting. First of all, we considered what leaders have done to bring reading in key stage 1 up to the same high standards that are evident in key stage 2. This was because in 2016 pupils' attainment in reading was well above average at key stage 2, but only average at key stage 1.
- Leaders have invested widely in high-quality texts and make sure that reading has a high profile across the school. The school works closely with parents to make sure that pupils also read regularly at home. Teachers have also focused on widening pupils' vocabulary, as some of them join the school with a limited range. There has been additional training for staff in teaching reading, especially in promoting pupils' comprehension skills and inference.
- As a result, standards at key stage 1 rose in 2017 and were similar to those at key stage 2. Standards in reading were above average. The Year 2 pupils who read to me were fluent and confident and understood the texts well.
- The second line of enquiry that we agreed was how effectively leaders are spending the pupil premium to ensure that differences are reducing between disadvantaged pupils and others nationally. The attainment of disadvantaged pupils at key stage 1 was behind the others in 2016, and their attendance was not as strong.
- This year, particular attention has been given to the relatively small number of pupils benefiting from the pupil premium to ensure that they make the progress they should and keep up with their peers. The governor who champions disadvantaged pupils is diligent in checking that no differences are allowed to develop between the performance of these pupils and that of the others.
- The school's performance information shows that most disadvantaged pupils made accelerated progress last year and almost all were on track to reach expected standards by the end of the key stage. More than a third of these pupils were on course to reach a higher standard. The few pupils whose progress was not so strong had additional difficulties to overcome. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils improved over the year so that there is now very little difference from that of other pupils.
- The final key line of enquiry we agreed related to the attainment of boys in the early years. In 2016, all the girls reached a good level of development by the end of the Reception year, but only two thirds of the boys did so.
- Your performance information shows that the attainment of boys and girls fluctuates from year to year because numbers are very small. It so happened that in 2016 boys had more additional needs than girls, and tended to have summer birthdays, meaning that they lacked some of the physical skills necessary to gain a good level of development.
- The early years teacher has made sure that activities are targeted to children's individual needs. Last year, children enjoyed a rich and varied curriculum that

included taking part in the 'National Bird Watch', when children counted and identified the different birds that come into the school grounds and found 13 different examples.

- As a result of the strong provision in the early years, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development in 2017 was above the national average, and boys performed as well as girls.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they take measures to improve pupils' handwriting and spelling
- teaching staff have the same high expectations of pupils in science as they do in English and mathematics, particularly of the most able.

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

Nick Butt  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, other school leaders, five governors including the chair and vice chair, administrative staff and pupils. I held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. Short visits were made to all classrooms where books were scrutinised. A range of documents, policies and assessment information was examined. I heard Year 2 pupils read. I considered 37 responses from parents to Ofsted's questionnaire, Parent View, and 16 free-text messages. I also considered questionnaire responses from pupils and staff.