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Miss A Flood
Gorse Hall Primary and Nursery School
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Dear Miss Flood

Short inspection of Gorse Hall Primary and Nursery School

Following my visit to the school on 12 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 your school was judged to be good in March 2014.

This school continues to be good.

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

You have taken over the role of headteacher from your predecessor with confidence and commitment. You are ably supported by a dedicated senior leadership team which is skilled across a range of areas. Your ability to 'grow new leaders' is commendable. You have created a new tier of middle leaders who are well trained and contribute positively to subject leadership.

The governing body has a clear understanding of the strategic role that it plays in the leadership of the school. Governors are a visible presence in the building. They contribute in classrooms, talk with leaders and meet with parents on open evenings. As a result of this dedicated approach, they contribute effectively to the school community and are aware of its strengths and areas for further development.

The pupils who I spoke with were exceptionally proud of their school. They told me that their school was a safe place to learn because leaders took their safety very seriously and ensured that there were good levels of supervision at breaktimes and lunchtimes. They thought that the first aid procedures were very good. They also said that they were encouraged to attend school regularly. Nevertheless, you rightly

recognise that there is still a need to improve some pupils' overall attendance further.

Your pupils also greatly enjoy the many roles on the school councils that you have provided for them. They said that they behave well because they want to represent their school on these councils and that they did not want to lose their 'Always' badges, which they wear with pride. Pupils' beliefs on celebrating difference were also commendable. One pupil noted, 'We cannot be mean to people just because they want to be who they are.'

The parents that I spoke to had only positive comments to make about the school. They noted that this was a happy school and that teachers were 'superb'. Most notably, parents spoke of the care that was given to pupils who have additional needs. They felt that teachers' commitment to inclusion was very strong. The responses made by some parents on the Parent View questionnaire mostly confirm these findings, with one parent saying, '...we feel his teacher and teaching assistant have shown both empathy and encouragement while promoting his independence'. As a consequence of improved links with parents, your school community has been presented with an award to recognise your work to improve communication in this area.

You were asked at the last inspection to further develop the role of middle leaders. This has been successfully undertaken and middle leaders are now trained effectively to develop the curriculum. These stronger leaders ensure that they have a more informed picture of attainment and progress in their subjects. This has resulted in leaders correctly noting that the teaching of mathematics requires further development to offer pupils more opportunities to advance their problem-solving skills. You have begun to address this issue by providing further training for your staff to enable this to happen.

Since the previous inspection, the curriculum has developed considerably. You have responded well to national changes and have created a variety of opportunities for pupils to make links with their local community and with a community in Africa. You rightly celebrate the numerous awards that you have achieved to celebrate curriculum developments on your website.

You were asked to ensure that the pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those who have difficulty maintaining good behaviour, are taught alongside their peers. This has been achieved by developing the role of your learning support assistants to enable them to offer effective additional support for these pupils within the classroom. As a consequence, pupils' achievement has improved and those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are taught in an effective manner alongside their peers.

You have also begun to improve challenge for the most able pupils through detailed assessment analyses. This process identifies pupils who need further support to

reach the higher standards. However, more use could be made of this assessment information so that these pupils are seen as a priority in the school's development planning.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are of a high standard. Records are up to date and thorough. All required checks take place to make sure that the adults in school do not pose any threat.

You have worked extremely hard with all leaders to create a culture in school where safety is paramount. The school site is secure and the identity of visitors is closely checked. Teachers are a visible presence at every point in the day when pupils are entering or leaving the building.

Pupils feel safe in school because they understand and appreciate the vigilance of staff. Pupils believe that staff act quickly when there are instances of poor behaviour or bullying. Through your school councils you have given pupils a clear voice. They have the opportunity to contribute to improvements in the culture of safety in the school. Pupils proudly informed me that lunchtimes were quieter and adults shared more games with them due to decisions that pupils had made.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry considered what leaders were doing to reverse the decline in pupils' attendance and the increase in pupils' persistent absence from school. This was especially the case for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. You have taken effective action by employing a member of staff who monitors attendance. She has successfully developed effective links with families and supports them in ensuring that their children arrive in school on time. Positive links with outside agencies are used effectively to address long-term absence. As a consequence, your overall attendance rates have risen and reflect those seen nationally. Persistent absence rates have dropped considerably and are now much closer to the national average. We agreed that, to make even more improvements, you should ensure that attendance reports are more detailed. The attendance rates of groups of pupils can then be analysed more effectively and any required action taken.
- I also focused on how effectively your pupil premium funding has been used to support the progress of disadvantaged pupils. You have used the funding successfully to meet the needs of pupils, especially those who have fallen behind in their learning or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. You employ members of staff who offer additional support to these pupils at different points in the school day, enabling them to catch up with their learning. You offer enrichment activities and provide emotional support where it is required. As a consequence, your assessment information and work in pupils' books show that

many of these pupils make good progress in response to the specific support that they receive.

- My next line of enquiry was to look at how leaders have developed teaching for the most able pupils in key stage 1. Leaders have guided teachers in assessment strategies and teachers now create and analyse their own data. This has enabled them to set clear targets for pupils and to check pupils' progress towards those targets. Leaders have also ensured that staff have undertaken focused training to aid them in accurately assessing pupils' work. Challenge groups have been set up to support the most able pupils throughout the day and to offer them additional opportunities to explore their learning. Your efforts are showing some success. The number of pupils who achieve at the higher levels at the end of Year 2 has increased in reading, writing and mathematics. However, you recognise the need to ensure that pupils have more opportunities to carry out problem-solving activities within the mathematics curriculum.
- Finally, I looked at how leaders support disadvantaged pupils to ensure that their writing skills match those seen in other areas of the curriculum. You offer your disadvantaged pupils focused support within the classroom and during a range of daily sessions. Your teachers now track their development thoroughly and are very clear as to the next steps in disadvantaged pupils' learning. Your curriculum is exciting and offers pupils many opportunities to write for real purposes. Most recently, your school took part in National Clean Air Day, where pupils wrote their pledges on handprints. Pupils were very excited to tell me that they had gained second place in Greater Manchester for this event and had worked closely with a local MP. The school's most recent assessment information shows that the progress and attainment of disadvantaged pupils are catching up with and, in some cases, exceeding those made by other pupils. The difference in attainment and progress between pupils' writing and their reading and mathematics is diminishing. We agreed that further provision is required to support these pupils within the school's improvement planning. This will ensure that a keen focus is maintained to diminish any differences even further.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they analyse attendance information more thoroughly and take prompt action to resolve concerns and improve attendance
- school improvement planning on pupils' outcomes is informed by the detailed assessment that leaders undertake, including for disadvantaged pupils
- pupils have more opportunities to carry out problem-solving activities within their mathematics curriculum.

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

Yours sincerely

Gill Pritchard
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, your two deputy headteachers and members of your senior leadership team. I also met with two members of the governing body, including the chair of governors, and members of staff who deal with attendance and aspects of safeguarding. I had informal discussions with a group of parents and pupils to seek their views of the school. Finally, I met with a representative from the local authority.

I visited all classrooms as part of my tour of the school and spent longer periods in Reception and Years 1, 2, 4 and 6. I was accompanied by you and one of your deputy headteachers. Examples of pupils' work were scrutinised and I listened to pupils read from Years 2, 3, 5 and 6. I observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and as they moved around the school. A number of documents were reviewed, including your record of checks on the suitability of staff, the school's self-evaluation form, the school improvement plan, assessment information, behaviour logs and attendance records. I also took account of 34 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, three responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and 33 responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire. I considered information posted on the school website.