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Mr David Hodgson
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Dear Mr Hodgson

Short inspection of Green Gates Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 18 October 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. Pupils enjoy coming to school and say teachers make the learning enjoyable and interesting. Their comments reflect positively on the recent work you have led on developing the curriculum. New topics cleverly combine a range of national curriculum themes in ways that are engaging, practical and appealing to pupils. Teachers teach with enthusiasm. They provide pupils with excellent resources that bring topics to life. They hold high expectations which are clearly reflected in the great care all pupils take with their presentation of their work. As a result, pupils' books for this academic year already show considerable progress has been made.

In the last inspection, leaders were asked to strengthen the quality of teaching and to ensure that standards in writing improved. Since then, the school has had a considerable turnover of teachers. Indeed, you describe last year as 'difficult' and 'turbulent'. In September, four new teachers joined the school. However, the good-quality leadership of each phase of the school is ensuring that new teachers are being guided and supported effectively. There is already an impressive consistency of approach, in line with expectations set out in your teaching and marking policies. You and your deputy headteacher make frequent checks on pupils' books and provide helpful feedback to teachers. Your least experienced teachers benefit from the weekly mentoring by the deputy headteacher. Morale is now good. Teachers plan together and are increasingly confident to take risks. Your own evaluation has highlighted the need to ensure that more lessons challenge the most able pupils

and 'challenge' is now your main focus of training. In our visits to lessons we found teachers trying new approaches and testing out the limits of pupils' understanding.

Standards in writing are now much improved. Displays in classrooms and around school showcase examples of writing that have flair and technical excellence. High expectations across the school mean standards of writing in English and topic books are consistently high. Pupils currently in the school are making strong progress because teachers have good subject knowledge and make clear how pupils can improve their work. Success criteria are used to guide pupils and pupils readily revisit, edit and improve their work in light of the feedback they receive. Handwriting improves rapidly as pupils move through the school. In 2017, provisional results from national curriculum assessments show an above average proportion of pupils attained the expected standard in writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2. The challenge now for the school is to stretch the most able pupils further so that more attain the higher standard.

Safeguarding is effective.

You conducted a thorough review of safeguarding as soon as you joined the school and made a number of improvements to ensure that the site was secure. You have also updated safeguarding policies and ensured that all members of staff are regularly trained and know what actions to take to protect children from harm. You have developed a safeguarding team of senior staff and strengthened your ability to support the most vulnerable pupils through the appointment of the pastoral coordinator. Staff are vigilant because they are briefed each week about child protection matters and safeguarding is a standing item on meeting agendas.

Last year you introduced a more sophisticated record keeping system. All members of staff now use the system confidently to record their concerns and the actions they take. Senior staff ensure that records are detailed and of good quality. Records show you act quickly to protect children and correctly involve other agencies, keeping parents informed appropriately.

During the inspection, we discussed how some aspects of the checks you make on adults who work in or visit the school could be tightened up.

Inspection findings

- On the surface, Green Gates Primary School appears to face significant challenges, as the school serves an area of high social deprivation. Over three quarters of your pupils come from disadvantaged households. However, the culture in school is one of high expectations and aspiration for all. You, your leadership team and all members of staff are determined pupils will thrive and attain the best possible standards. Levels of attendance are above the national average and there are very few pupils who miss school often. Parents who spoke to me are full of praise for the staff. You make considerable effort to involve parents, beginning with the good opportunities for parents to get involved with Nursery and Reception activities. You keep parents well informed through your

weekly newsletter and digital media. I found parents were very impressed with programmes such as 'Read for the Stars' and 'Writer of the Week'.

- On this inspection, I looked closely at standards in reading, as provisional results for 2017 appeared disappointing and out of line with other subjects. I found you had reviewed test results carefully and examined pupils' answers to the national curriculum tests in detail. Although you found a handful of pupils missed the expected standard by only one or two marks, you identified pupils were less confident inferring information from texts. As a result, you have made a number of changes to the way reading skills are taught. Guided reading sessions are now timetabled each day. New class sets of really interesting and challenging books have been purchased. Reading journals have been introduced and pupils spend more time writing their answers to more challenging questions that test their understanding of the subtleties within the text. Pupils are really enjoying the books you have bought and make good use of the redeveloped and welcoming library. The initial impression is that these well-thought-out approaches are improving pupils' reading skills. However, leaders need to monitor this carefully and ensure that standards in reading reach the national average or better at the end of key stage 2 next summer.
- You have also reviewed how you teach the younger pupils to develop their reading skills. Here also, more structured guided reading and new class texts have been introduced. You have recognised previous methods taught pupils secure phonics skills and the ability to decode new words. Outcomes in the Year 1 national phonics screening check have compared favourably with the national average. However, teaching did not do enough to develop pupils' deeper understanding of books. When I listened to some older pupils read I found they could decode words effectively but were less able to summarise storylines or talk about how characters in their book were feeling.
- I also focused on the quality of learning in the early years. Standards have risen steadily since the last inspection, but still remain just short of those seen nationally. I found the early years leader has a clear vision and plans in place to develop provision further. She knows what additional resources are needed to improve the outdoor space and is using the extra funding for disadvantaged children wisely. Rigorous assessments mean adults know precisely what skills children need to develop and teaching is thoughtfully designed to provide the right types of activities. Children enter the Nursery with skills below or well below those typical for their age. They make good progress and by the end of Reception over 60% are working at the expected standard. However, I found some pupils in Year 1 still are not fully secure in basic phonics or number skills. More focused teaching of basic skills in the Reception Year, especially for those children who are ready, would better prepare them for the next stage of their education.
- The governors know the school well. They are ambitious for its long-term future and determined to ensure that it is outward looking and well connected with other schools keen to share ideas and expertise. Governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and hold leaders tightly to account. For example, governors have asked the headteacher to improve the school improvement plan, as it currently does not set sharp enough targets or

criteria by which to measure progress. Neither does it set out milestones by when progress will be evaluated. Governors think carefully about how they use their time. They have changed the pattern of their meetings in order to make best use of their expertise and to give greater scrutiny to in-year assessment information. Consequently, there are robust systems in place to spot any underperformance quickly. Governors also track the way additional funds are used and challenge leaders to demonstrate the pupil premium is used wisely.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the current school improvement plan is sharpened up, so that it provides governors with a helpful tool to monitor and evaluate the effect of planned actions
- standards in reading by the end of key stage 2 improve to be in line with or above the national average
- the proportion of children attaining a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year reaches that seen nationally and that more children have a secure grasp of reading, writing and number skills by the time they begin Year 1
- teachers consistently challenge the most able pupils so more fulfil their potential and attain the higher levels in national curriculum assessments at the end of key stages 1 and 2.

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

Yours sincerely

Chris Smith
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this one-day inspection, I met with you, the early years leader and a group of governors. I also met with a group of pupils and listened to some of them read. Together, you and I visited lessons in each phase of the school to look at the impact of your work to develop the quality of teaching. During lesson visits, I sampled pupils' books and talked to pupils about their learning and progress. The deputy headteacher and I looked in detail at some pupils' work in order to evaluate the progress pupils had made over time. I also walked around the school to look at pupils' behaviour and conduct at social times. I met with a group of parents and looked at the 15 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View). I looked

at a range of documentation including the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning, policies, child protection records and information available on the school website. I focused particularly on the progress of pupils currently in the school, especially in reading and writing, the progress of children in the early years and the effectiveness of leaders' work to improve the quality of teaching. I also looked closely at the work of governors and the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements.