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Mr John Ross
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Dear Mr Ross

Short inspection of Great Wood Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 26 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 March 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Together with the new deputy headteacher and the assistant headteachers, you work successfully to support and develop the abilities of staff and pupils. At Great Wood, pupils enjoy school and benefit from a well-planned curriculum. Pupils' learning is rewarding and varied. They try wearing a real space suit during the study of outer space. They learn the language used to create web pages and web applications. They learn to appreciate the fun of music such as Mozart's Horn Concerto Number 4. Opportunities for pupils to learn about their own community are first-rate. For example, pupils in Year 2 learn much about the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI). Pupils learn about the vital role of the RNLI in the coastal town of Morecambe.

The school continues to grow and improve because of good teaching and strong leadership. There is much to keep pupils happy and excited about learning at Great Wood. Pupils make good progress across classes and different subjects. Leaders have developed a school site with several additional modern classrooms. It is little wonder that the school remains popular and over-subscribed.

You have agreed values with the whole school community that are not just displayed throughout the site but pursued keenly by leaders and staff. Leaders frequently take steps to encourage behaviour such as thoughtfulness and trust. Staff teach pupils to respect one another, so they are ready to live in the diverse world of modern Britain. Thus, for example, pupils learned recently about the Jewish New Year Rosh Hashanah.

Staff celebrate pupils' learning thoughtfully, for example in a corridor display of photographs of pupils' science experiments at home. Staff display pupils' names from each class when they have learned even more of their multiplication tables.

As part of our joint visits to lessons, you and I observed teaching in the Reception class. We saw children very engaged in their learning outdoors, including in several opportunities to write. Yet we noted far fewer opportunities to develop children's writing skills indoors. You recognise that providing better activities to develop children's writing abilities is a priority for this term.

At the previous inspection, one aspect to improve was how well leaders focus on pupils' learning and outcomes. Leaders now follow well-considered arrangements to review how well pupils learn and progress. You make full use of the local authority's regular and detailed reviews of your work to help you consider what further improvements to pursue. You combine this information with your own careful reviews of the school. Leaders and staff debate regularly any insights gained from numerous visits to other local schools. You set clear priorities for improving the work of staff. You identify many actions that help the school to develop. Even so, you agree that some targets and next steps for improving pupils' writing in key stage 1 need to be more clear.

You have improved pupils' opportunities to use and apply their mathematical skills across the curriculum. Leaders and staff have achieved this by undertaking much training to better understand the teaching of mathematics. You have revised the school curriculum carefully. Checks on the work of pupils and staff are frequent and detailed. Staff now give much attention to how well pupils understand key concepts in mathematics in a wide range of different contexts.

Inspectors also recommended at the previous inspection that staff provide more challenge for the most able pupils. Much teaching now gives careful consideration to meeting the needs of pupils of different abilities. Teaching assistants play a key role in supporting the work of teachers and challenging all pupils. For example, several most able pupils in mathematics in Year 6 told me how much their work makes them think.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Staff log concerns about pupils' care and well-being carefully. Leaders share relevant information promptly with other agencies. Staff and governors regularly discuss national safeguarding information as well as school or community issues. Pupils and parents say that staff and leaders are approachable and listen to any concerns they raise. Leaders check the views of the school community through regular questionnaires. They seek the views of parents. Leaders ask how well the school supports pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils learn about safety issues, including online safety, frequently and in detail. Leaders and governors are seeking to raise the quality of the school's safeguarding work even further by increasing staff's already good access to child protection training.

Inspection findings

- While the work of the governing body was praised at the previous inspection, governors have refined the quality of their own work in recent years. They now track and review improvements in the school very closely. Governors' skilful challenge and support to staff and leaders adds much to the continued improvement of the school. Much of what happens in the school is the result of the joint efforts of staff, leaders and governors working successfully together.
- Leaders recently identified that weaknesses in the teaching of writing in Reception held children back from achieving as much as they could in Years 1 and 2. The quality of pupils' writing in key stage 1 is now improving steadily. This is because of greater access to training for staff, leading to better teaching. Staff are becoming more skilled in assessing pupils' writing to plan their teaching. Pupils now enjoy many more meaningful opportunities to write. For example, pupils enthusiastically retold the story of Grace Darling. Current pupils in key stage 1 are beginning to write well. Even so, leaders' plans for improvement lack enough clarity about how pupils' writing will improve even further.
- In the Reception class, children now have worthwhile opportunities to develop their writing skills when learning outdoors. For example, they use large chinks to scribe their names on the playground. They use large and small paintbrushes and water to paint marks on chalkboards. But, children have too few opportunities to develop their writing skills when playing in the indoor classroom, for example when acting in role-play activities or making models.
- Pupils in key stage 2 with whom I spoke greatly enjoy their learning in mathematics. The most able pupils told me that mathematics lessons are rewarding and help them to become better at thinking and solving problems. Staff make skilled use of questions to prompt pupils to think carefully about their answers. For example, staff say to pupils, 'Explain to me how you arrived at that answer.' Pupils know how to use learning challenges set by teachers to deepen and strengthen their learning. They know how to pursue the school motto of 'Aim high'. School information indicates that the proportion of pupils in Year 6 making good progress in their mathematics skills is increasing quickly.
- Leaders challenge one another about what difference they make as a team to the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes. They share a strong and unified view of how well the school is improving and where they might improve further. They make sure key school priorities are widely understood and visible, clearly on display in staff communal areas. Leaders seek challenge to their work from outside the school. They consider regularly the insights offered by the local authority, as well as from staff in other local schools. The new school leadership team has a detailed knowledge of the school. They put this knowledge to good effect to drive improvement.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- activities and resources in the early years promote and better develop children's ability to write

- plans for improving pupils' writing in key stage 1 show explicit actions and next steps.

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

Yours sincerely

Tim Vaughan
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, you and I observed teaching and learning jointly in a sample of classrooms, spoke with pupils and looked at samples of pupils' work. I spoke to several parents as they brought their children to school. I considered information from school surveys of pupils and parents. I considered responses from 36 pupils to an Ofsted survey. I reviewed 37 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View. I met with the leadership team to discuss your reviews of the school and your plans for improvement. I met with six members of the governing body, including the chair. I took account of 18 responses from staff to an Ofsted questionnaire. I met with your linked external adviser from Lancashire local authority. I checked school records about child protection. I reviewed checks made by the school on the suitability of adults to work with pupils.