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Mrs Sue Jackson
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Jackson

Short inspection of Greengate Junior School

Following my visit to the school on 11 January 2018, 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 September 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice in certain areas. This may indicate that the school is improving towards being outstanding. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

You and your leadership team work effectively with staff to provide a harmonious learning community. Staff are dedicated and focused on meeting the personal needs of pupils and their families, while encouraging pupils to reach their full potential academically.

You, senior leaders and governors have an accurate and reflective view of the school's strengths and priorities. You lead by example and are determined to improve the school further, having high expectations of what you and your staff can achieve. Both long-serving and relatively new members of the governing body bring with them a raft of skills and experience with which they support and challenge you effectively to make improvements. Governors are steadfast in ensuring that Greengate pupils get the best possible start in life and that pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their education.

At the previous inspection in 2012, inspectors asked the leadership team, including governors, to improve teaching from good to outstanding. The quality of teaching over time is usually never less than good and is often better. This is because you

ensure that there are many opportunities to share best practice, both across and beyond the school. You and several leaders have considerable expertise and work with teachers in other schools to improve their practice.

You have embedded transparent systems and procedures for checking the quality of teaching and learning. You hold staff to account, using precise targets that are linked to accelerating pupils' progress. As a result, pupils' outcomes continue to improve.

Inspectors also asked you to raise the attainment of middle-ability pupils and pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. Since the previous inspection, you and your staff have ensured that outcomes for middle-ability pupils have improved. Staff have embedded a new curriculum successfully. Combined with the high quality of teaching, this led to middle-ability pupils achieving well by the end of Year 6 in 2016 and again in 2017. The proportion of middle-ability pupils reaching expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics was higher than the national average in 2017. Progress made in reading and writing was higher than the national average. However, progress was slightly lower in mathematics. The leadership team has identified this as an area for further development, together with increasing the proportion of pupils reaching the higher standards in mathematics.

You have established an inclusive school community where pupils thrive, whatever their needs. Almost a quarter of pupils are identified as having SEN and/or disabilities. You and your staff ensure that pupils develop social and emotional skills to support their academic progress. Parents and carers highly value the support provided through the nurture group. One parent commented that 'since my child has moved schools, his behaviours and confidence have come on in leaps and bounds'. You and your relatively new special educational needs coordinator have reviewed the specialist interventions and how they are delivered and monitored. These interventions are ensuring that pupils with particular needs make similar progress to their peers, whatever their starting points.

Safeguarding is effective.

In your role as the designated safeguarding leader, and together with your deputy designated safeguarding leader, you work tirelessly to ensure that all safeguarding arrangements meet requirements. You make sure that staff fully understand their duty and follow systems and procedures for logging concerns. Together with the office manager, you ensure that all necessary checks are made on the suitability of staff to work with children. When I arrived at the start of the inspection, the effectiveness of procedures to check on those visiting school was clear for me to see.

You ensure that the promotion of safeguarding throughout the school has a very high profile. You provide staff with training that is up to date, so that they and members of the local governing committee understand the current guidance. You and the deputy designated safeguarding leader are prompt in making referrals to

the local authority. Together, you rigorously follow up all concerns raised by staff and make sure that pupils are kept safe from potential harm. You work with a wide range of external agencies to provide expertise to support pupils' welfare, as and when necessary. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of a high quality.

Inspection findings

- As part of this inspection, I looked at how reading is taught across the school. The reason for this was that the proportions of girls and disadvantaged pupils reaching the higher standards were lower than the national averages in 2017. You and your leadership team have put a number of strategies in place to address this. Working with an external consultant, you have introduced more opportunities for the development of comprehension and inference skills. For example, in a Year 5 guided reading session, the teacher skilfully questioned pupils' knowledge of what they had read together. The teacher probed pupils' predictions of what might happen next and why. This ensured that this tested the accuracy of pupils' understanding of the text and of inference. The teacher ensured that girls and the disadvantaged pupils were as engaged as the boys and were making good progress. Pupils told me how important reading is as a life skill and were keen to show me the range of books in the refurbished library. They talked enthusiastically about their favourite authors and the genres that they enjoy and why.
- Second, I explored how effectively leaders ensure that more pupils reach higher standards in mathematics, including girls and disadvantaged pupils. Teachers in Year 3 identify gaps in learning when pupils join the school. Leaders ensure that pupils receive appropriate interventions to help pupils to catch up. Leaders have introduced a whole-school approach to the teaching of mathematics. Mastery in mathematics has recently been introduced. Pupils' books demonstrate the focus on problem solving and pupils explaining the reasons behind their answers. This is proving to be effective and teachers plan activities effectively for the range of abilities in their class. Teachers focus on challenging the middle- and higher-ability pupils, including girls and disadvantaged pupils. This is to develop their reasoning skills so that they reach the higher standards by the end of Year 6.
- Next, I considered the breadth of the curriculum and to what extent it provides opportunities to develop skills as well as raising pupils' aspirations. Leaders have developed a new curriculum that is broad and balanced. Teachers ensure that history, geography and other subjects are embedded into topic work and this provides a curriculum that adds interest to learning. Pupils told me how much they enjoy the opportunity to decide on their own class topic in the spring term. This is inspiring them to find out information for themselves, using books and technology. Parents commented that 'topics are interesting and informative' and that their children 'come home engaged and excited for the next lesson'. Staff ensure that performing arts and sport play a significant role in the life of this school. You employ musicians so that all Year 3 pupils can learn to play a brass instrument, giving them the opportunity to perform for members of the local community. Staff organise trips and visits, for example to outdoor centres and a residential to York. This broadens pupils' horizons and inspires pupils to write

about their experiences.

- Finally, I was impressed by pupils' excellent behaviour, towards their work, towards each other and towards the adults around them. Teachers' recording in pupils' behaviour logs show that incidents of poor behaviour are rare. This was supported by responses to the Ofsted staff questionnaire and in talking to parents and pupils. Staff are proactive in raising concerns about potentially vulnerable pupils and this leads to swift support which is highly personalised for individual pupils. Specialist support for the nurture group helps pupils to develop their personal and social skills in readiness for learning. You and your staff have an impressive success rate in helping pupils to succeed both personally and academically. This is particularly positive as some pupils have had negative experiences in other schools. You work tirelessly with a raft of external agencies to ensure that pupils and the wider family are provided with the support that they need.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- a greater proportion of middle-attaining and most-able pupils reach the higher standards in mathematics.

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

Yours sincerely

Naomi Taylor
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I observed teaching and learning alongside the headteacher. I held meetings with senior leaders, subject leaders, members of the governing body, the designated safeguarding leader and the deputy designated safeguarding leader. There were not enough responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, to generate a report. I spoke informally with parents at the school gates to seek their views. I also took account of six free-text responses from parents. I held a meeting with pupils and also spoke informally with pupils during breaktimes and in lessons. I reviewed the 19 responses to the Ofsted staff survey. During the inspection, I reviewed a range of school documents. These included: the school's development plans and self-evaluation documents; minutes of the governing body meetings; safeguarding documentation and records relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance.