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Mrs Claire Coates
Griffydam Primary School
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Dear Mrs Coates

Short inspection of Griffydam Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 30 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 November 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. In the short time since you took up your post as headteacher in April 2017, you have successfully tackled some necessary budgetary and staffing issues. Your work has brought stability to the school after a period of change. You have a good knowledge of the school's strengths and recognise the areas that are in need of further improvement.

You have been active in seeking partnerships that will benefit the school and are currently involved in three. The Unity Partnership involves you collaborating with other small schools in the area. The Ashby Learning Community helps your school to build links with the local secondary school. The Forest Way Teaching Alliance is providing you with support in your role as a recently appointed headteacher. In addition to these partnerships, your involvement in a regional mathematics hub is supporting the development of this subject in school.

The governing body has been through a period of change, including the recent appointment of two co-chairs. For this reason, the local authority is providing support through a national leader of governance, who is working with the governing body. Governors receive regular information on the quality of teaching and on the attainment and progress of all groups of pupils. The governing body performs its strategic role effectively. It holds you to account for the school's performance, challenges you and offers support when it is needed. Governors collaborate well with staff on areas such as identifying priorities for the school's development and ensuring that there are common strategic aims and vision.

Staff know all pupils well as individuals in this small primary school, and relationships between staff and pupils are strong. There is a strong sense of community within the school. Pupils are happy and enjoy coming to school. They are polite, friendly and confident. Pupils appreciate the range of clubs and activities that are offered to them, such as hockey and football clubs, swimming sessions and residential trips.

Pupils are taught about other faiths and religions, and show an understanding and acceptance of these. They spoke very highly of the school and about how they are treated by staff. One child remarked, 'We all get on here; it's a nice school to come to.' Parents and carers also speak positively about the school. They appreciate what one parent described as 'the good leadership, community feel and approachability of the staff'.

Leaders have taken action to tackle the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Teachers now provide greater guidance and support in pupils' mathematics books, including suggesting further work through corrections or asking for more detail of their reasoning in pupils' written explanations. Pupils usually respond well to these requests, although some, with no further teacher action evident, occasionally ignore them.

Leaders now check the quality of teaching and pupils' attainment and progress throughout the school in reading, writing and mathematics. For example, the headteacher carefully checks younger pupils' attainment and progress in phonics each half term. Discussion with the teacher then leads to adjustments to teachers' plans and extra input to fill the gaps in knowledge and learning identified. These checks on pupils' attainment and progress, however, are not as evident in the foundation subjects. Leaders are in the early stages of designing assessment and tracking systems for pupils' progress in the other subjects. Pupils' work in their topic books is not of the same standard as in their books for reading, writing and mathematics. You acknowledge this and agree with my finding that some of the 'Griffydham non-negotiables' are not being consistently followed by all pupils. For example, pupils do not always underline dates and titles with a ruler. This adversely affects the presentation of some pupils' work.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding systems are robust and the arrangements are fit for purpose. All staff receive safeguarding training and understand their responsibilities in ensuring pupils' safety. Processes for reporting concerns and for making referrals are clear and understood by all. Governors have a good understanding of their duties for safeguarding and receive the necessary training including, for example, in safer recruitment and in the 'Prevent' duty. A safeguarding link governor undertakes periodic checks of the school's safeguarding records and the arrangements for site security and for visitors to gain access and to sign in.

Pupils feel safe and well cared for. They are fully aware of potential dangers such as those posed by the internet. They report that bullying is rare, but know what to do

should it occur. The headteacher maintains careful records of all behavioural incidents such as bullying. Actions and outcomes are clearly indicated.

Inspection findings

- Leaders are aware that the progress of disadvantaged pupils does not yet match that of non-disadvantaged pupils. Leaders have put strategies in place to rectify this. The school has used its relatively small pupil premium fund to support the social and emotional needs of this vulnerable group. It has provided effective intervention work. This has included a 'Lego' therapy group that has helped pupils to improve their communication skills, confidence and self-esteem. The school has also helped with the costs of uniform and trips, so enabling these pupils to gain access to more opportunities and to feel valued.
- The effectiveness of interventions for disadvantaged pupils is monitored through detailed case studies. Adaptations or different strategies are introduced if these checks indicate that the interventions are not having the desired effect. Leaders have also used some of the pupil premium funding to buy in the services of an educational psychologist. This has speeded up the process of obtaining additional external support for some of the school's vulnerable pupils.
- The school's assessment information indicates that all current disadvantaged pupils are making good progress with either their academic work or their 'readiness for learning' skills. This was also borne out by the evidence of these pupils' progress in classroom visits and in books. The school acknowledges that as more pupils become 'learning ready', more of this group would benefit from additional support to reinforce their academic development. At present, opportunities for doing this are limited, but leaders have plans to rectify this.
- Another focus for the inspection was to look at the provision and outcomes for reading for pupils in key stage 1. Leaders are aware of a recent pattern of results at the end of key stage 1 being weaker than those at the end of key stage 2 in this subject. The school has started to tackle this issue through training and professional development. Leaders' input includes focused work on improving daily guided-reading sessions, raising teachers' expectations and improving their subject knowledge. Attention has been paid to the new and more demanding curriculum.
- Small group provision for phonics is beginning to have an impact on reading. Carefully targeted teaching, accompanied by rigorous checks on progress, is improving younger pupils' early reading skills. A small group reading intervention programme that the school calls 'Reading Gladiators' is used to promote reading at home. It is also used to increase reading stamina and higher-order reading skills.
- Reading corners in classrooms in key stage 1 have been introduced to improve the environment and to encourage pupils to read for pleasure. Leaders consider that the school does not yet have enough high-quality texts available in the library. Leaders are planning to remedy this.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers have higher expectations of the presentation of pupils' work and consistently apply the school's 'non-negotiables' so that work in topic books is of the same quality as that in reading, writing and mathematics
- they extend checks on pupils' progress and challenge to subjects outside reading, writing and mathematics.

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

Yours sincerely

John Savage
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and three members of the governing body, including the two co-chairs. I also met with a representative of the Forest Way Teaching School (commissioned by Leicestershire County Council). I met with a group of pupils to gather their opinions about the school. I visited classes with you to observe teaching and learning. I looked at a sample of pupils' work from different year groups. I observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and at breaktime. I considered the views of 35 parents posted on Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. I also met some parents at the start of the school day. I visited the breakfast club to check that pupils were safe. I read a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation, its development plan and your review of governance. I studied information related to attendance and examined safeguarding records and policies. I also examined the school's website to check that it meets requirements on the publication of specified information.