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Mr Mark Melling
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Melling

Short inspection of Brindle Gregson Lane 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 January 2014.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

You have worked alongside governors successfully to develop an open, inclusive culture at the school. Pupils value the warm, welcoming environment because of the excellent relationships that they have with staff. Parents and carers responding to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, described the school as a 'caring and nurturing community'. Governors and staff demonstrate a genuine determination to do the best for the pupils at the school.

Following the last inspection, leaders were asked to improve the quality of teaching to enable pupils to make more rapid progress, particularly the most able pupils. Teachers now ensure that pupils reflect more carefully on their work so that they can learn from their mistakes. This contributed to an improvement in pupils' progress by the end of key stage 2. In 2017, progress in reading was above the national average and progress in writing and mathematics was broadly in line with national averages. However, leaders have not secured sufficient improvements to the overall quality of teaching, especially for the most able pupils in mathematics. Attainment is not good enough because too few pupils reach the highest standards. In key stage 1 there is also a pattern of decline in the attainment of pupils in reading and writing.

Leaders' plans for improvement lack precision and detail. They do not sufficiently address the issues facing the school. This is because leaders do not undertake sufficiently robust checks on the quality of teaching and learning. They do not measure the impact of teaching on pupils' learning and progress with adequate rigour. Moreover, leaders have not provided some middle leaders with the necessary ongoing training to ensure that they fulfil their leadership roles effectively. Consequently, the rate of school improvement is not as rapid as it should be.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. As the safeguarding leader, you share your expertise with staff. As a result, all staff are aware of the statutory guidance and there is a culture of vigilance in the school. Governors receive safeguarding training and they prioritise pupils' safety above all else.

Pupils said that they feel safe in the school. They are reassured by the fact that staff act swiftly to deal with any instances of poor behaviour. Leaders promote anti-bullying well and pupils said that bullying is very rare. This exemplifies your proactive approach to ensure that pupils are safe. The curriculum supports effectively pupils' understanding of how to keep safe, including when online.

Inspection findings

- As part of the inspection we agreed on a number of key lines of enquiry. We agreed to look at how effectively leaders are improving pupils' progress and attainment in reading and writing in key stage 1. To do this, you have ensured that there is a more consistent way of teaching phonics, which has resulted in an increase in pupils' confidence when applying their phonics skills. Pupils read texts that are well matched to their abilities and they have opportunities to re-read books to develop their fluency. They make steady progress. Pupils' writing books show that middle-ability pupils make good progress because work is well matched to their needs. However, there is a lack of challenge for the most able pupils. Their progress is limited to that of other groups because the work does not stretch their thinking sufficiently.
- Leaders do not evaluate the quality of teaching and learning well enough through their monitoring processes. Plans to improve writing lack clear priorities and precise measures of their impact. Governors do not have the information that they need to evaluate the effectiveness of the actions taken to improve this aspect, or indeed other aspects, of the school. This is particularly evident in key stage 1, where standards in reading and writing in 2017 were well below the national average.
- You have rightly recognised that the most able pupils can be challenged further in mathematics and have taken steps to address this. Results in 2017, at the end of key stage 2, show improving rates of progress. Year 6 pupils are enthusiastic about the opportunities that they have to work with staff from the high school to extend their mathematical skills. The mathematics leader has a good awareness of what needs to be done by the end of Year 6 and has improved some aspects of mathematics, such as pupils' ability to work with fractions. However, improvements are not swift enough. There is little evidence in pupils' books to show that the most able pupils are consistently working at the appropriate level of challenge. In books there are few

examples of pupils practising their mathematical reasoning skills, although older pupils said that this does happen during some lessons.

- Finally, we agreed to look at how well leaders plan for the development of pupils' skills in science. The quality of pupils' work in science varies between year groups. The best work displays a clear awareness of investigative skills and an understanding of scientific concepts. For example, in Year 5 books, pupils effectively demonstrate their understanding of the process of dissolving. Nevertheless, this high standard is not matched across some other year groups. This inconsistency arises because senior leaders have not capitalised on the enthusiasm and commitment of middle leaders in both science and some other subjects. Senior leaders have not invested sufficient time in the development of middle leaders' leadership skills. Consequently, they are not as effective as they should be in their roles. Senior leaders do not afford middle leaders the time and support that they need to evaluate the quality of teaching and learning in their subjects. This undoubtedly effects the overall rate of learning and progress for some pupils.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- plans to improve the school provide clear, ambitious targets so that the rate of school improvement increases
- leaders' checks on the quality of teaching and learning are more regular and accurate in their evaluation of strengths and weaknesses
- middle leaders develop their skills so that they lead improvements in the quality of teaching and learning in their subjects
- there is greater challenge for the most able pupils in key stage 1 in writing and in mathematics across the school.

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

Steve Bentham
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection I met with leaders and governors to discuss safeguarding and aspects of the school's leadership and management. Together, we visited classes and spoke to pupils informally about their work during lessons. I heard pupils from Year 1 and Year 3 read and also listened to pupils as part of classroom activities. I reviewed documentation about safeguarding, which included the school's record of checks undertaken on newly appointed staff. I spoke with pupils about safeguarding, behaviour

and different aspects of their science and mathematics work. I conducted a scrutiny of key stage 1 pupils' writing as well as mathematics and science work from across the school. I analysed leaders' records of the monitoring of teaching and learning; the school's evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses; and the school development plan. I took into account 39 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View.