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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
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Mrs Lindsay Timms  
Headteacher  
Cottam Primary School  
Haydocks Lane  
Cottam  
Preston  
Lancashire  
PR4 0NY

Dear Mrs Timms

### **Short inspection of Cottam Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 21 February 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.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

You, your staff and the governing body are passionate about your school; it is pivotal in the community and you are rightly proud of its caring and nurturing reputation. You are tenacious in ensuring that the pupils in your care are fully prepared for the future and leave Cottam ready for the next steps in their education.

Governors work hard for their school. They are very effective at holding you to account and have sharp evaluation skills. They have a wide range of abilities and talents and are very committed to the role. As a result, governors have an honest and realistic view of the school and are supportive and challenging in equal measure.

Children start school with skills that are typically expected for their age. They make good progress in the early years. When they leave Reception, most have skills that are at least expected for their age. Parents and carers are extremely appreciative of the start their children receive at the school. Children are given opportunities to read, write and use numbers in every area of learning, which leads to good progress across the curriculum. The environment is spacious and welcoming. Children can learn and explore in a variety of ways, including indoors and out, which

allows them to benefit from a range of experiences. On the day of the inspection, they were visited by the fire service, which caused much excitement. Children were able to use vocabulary such as 'The engine has big hoses and ladders to fight the fires.'

Results in national tests in Year 2 and Year 6 in 2017 were particularly pleasing. Pupils made good progress and achieved above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics in both key stages. The school's current assessment information shows that the vast majority of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, are making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.

Pupils access a wide range of sporting opportunities. The school benefits from taking part in a wide range of competitions locally. In addition, governors are keen to use the funding for sport to ensure that all pupils benefit from an active lifestyle. With this in mind, pupils can participate in activities such as fencing, judo and jujitsu, as well as more traditional sports such as football, netball and rugby.

Parents are extremely happy with the school. They particularly value the happy atmosphere in the school and the good progress their children make. Typical comments included: 'I am extremely proud that my child attends Cottam' and 'This is a fantastic school and I couldn't praise it enough.'

Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning and are enthusiastic about their lessons. They attend well and enjoy coming to school. You are aware that some pupils in Year 6 find learning challenging, but good teaching and a robust behaviour policy have ensured that the vast majority of pupils are enjoying their learning.

At the previous inspection, inspectors asked the school to improve leadership and management, in particular the work of middle leaders. Subject leaders are developing their roles and are now given many more opportunities to promote their subject. They are beginning to understand how to measure the standards in each subject. You were also asked to further improve teaching and assessment. You have visited other schools and provided professional development for all staff to develop their practice. As a result, teaching is good and assessments are accurate. For example, the training you received to improve the teaching and assessment of reading has resulted in pupils' better comprehension skills.

The local authority has offered a range of support over the last year, which you and your staff have valued. This support has been effective in helping to develop middle leadership and ensure effective assessment at key stage 1.

You are keen to keep improving the school and acknowledge that more can be done to develop the curriculum in subjects beyond English and mathematics. You also have high aspirations for all members of the school community and would like all pupils, particularly the most able in upper key stage 2, to take greater pride in the way that they present their work.

## **Safeguarding is effective.**

Safeguarding arrangements are effective. Policies and procedures are up to date and are reviewed regularly. All staff receive training appropriate to their job role and they are knowledgeable about what to do if they are worried about a child who may be at risk.

You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You keep detailed records of child protection meetings and you make sure that all appropriate checks are in place when new staff are appointed to the school.

You and your staff are extremely vigilant and, as a result, pupils say that they feel safe and parents agree. The school site is secure and pupils know how to keep themselves safe, including when online.

## **Inspection findings**

- At the start of the inspection, we agreed key lines of enquiry. The first looked at the depth and breadth of the curriculum beyond English and mathematics. Evidence in books shows that curriculum time for each subject is varied across the school. For example, in some classes religious education is given more weighting than history, whereas in others science is given more weighting than geography. In history and geography, learning is sometimes too superficial and topics are not taught in enough depth. As a result, pupils' understanding of these subjects is shallow.
- Some subjects are taught much more effectively. In art, pupils have visited a sculpture park and used clay, paints and textiles to create a variety of work. Visits to a nearby high school and local university have enhanced the design technology curriculum. Pupils take part in food technology and design projects and have also created moving vehicles. Music is taught effectively throughout the school, particularly in key stage 2, where every pupil can learn an instrument. Social, moral, spiritual and cultural learning is effective across the school. Pupils are given many opportunities to take part in a myriad of events such as World Book Day, Red Nose Day, and visits to theatres and museums. They also benefit from visits from the fire service and the police service as well as residential visits. Pupils raise money for many charities including a partner school in Uganda, where they sponsor a pupil.
- The second line of enquiry looked at whether teaching was sufficiently challenging to ensure that the most able pupils achieve as well as they can in reading and writing. Reading is taught effectively across the school. Pupils are given opportunities to develop their comprehension skills, particularly their skills of inference and deduction. Children get off to a good start in early years, where phonics teaching is good and parents are very supportive of their children's reading. This effective teaching continues through school and results in reading are strong in every year group, including for the most able pupils.
- Pupils also achieve well in writing. Your focus on widening pupils' vocabulary is paying off and pupils are writing with more variety and flair, particularly in key

stage 1. Pupils in key stage 2 are able to write at length, but they sometimes find it difficult to maintain the quality of their writing over long periods. Furthermore, some pupils do not consistently present their work well. All groups of pupils make good progress in writing throughout the school. However, the most able pupils do not consistently make the progress they are capable of making in the latter stages of key stage 2.

- The final line of enquiry looked at the standards of behaviour across the school. Pupils are polite, well-mannered and engaging. They are keen to show off their school and pupils I spoke to were incredibly proud of their community. Pupils hold doors open for each other and welcome others to the school. Recently, the school has dealt effectively with an increase in challenging behaviour. This has meant that learning has not been disrupted. Pupils understand the whole-school reward system and they enjoy the rewards they receive; these include using a special pen, dinner with the teacher or wearing slippers for a day. Pupils say that behaviour is good and what they describe as 'silly' behaviour is dealt with swiftly and effectively by teachers. The school has very productive partnerships with the local high schools and this has allowed them to develop smooth transitions, particularly for those pupils who may find the move to high school difficult.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the curriculum in all subjects is taught in depth and brought to life with rich and memorable activities
- presentation of work in upper key stage 2 is good for all pupils, including the most able.

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

Emma Jackson  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with you and other members of staff, including the deputy headteacher. I also met with members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority. I talked with pupils in a meeting and with others during lessons.

I took account of responses to the online questionnaires for parents, pupils and staff. I visited classrooms to observe pupils' learning and looked at their work in books. I reviewed information about pupils' progress and attainment. I scrutinised

the school's self-evaluation document and school improvement plan and looked at safeguarding, including evaluating the impact of the school's procedures and policies to keep pupils safe.