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Mr John Cooper
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Cooper

Short inspection of Greswell Primary School and Nursery

Following my visit to the school on 13 March 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 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Leaders, staff and governors have a clear, shared ambition for the school. Staff morale is high and staff say that they are proud to work at Greswell. The overwhelming majority of parents and carers who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, are highly supportive of the school. They are particularly happy with the quality of care and support that pupils receive. One parent's comment, typical of many, was: 'Greswell is a good school with an excellent ethos and values.'

Pupils are well mannered, friendly and welcoming to visitors. They are happy to talk about their work, confidently explaining concepts being covered in mathematics or talking about texts that they are reading. Pupils' behaviour around school and on the playground is of a high standard, and their attitudes to learning are consistently good. Pupils listen well to teachers' instructions and explanations and settle quickly to their work. Rates of attendance are broadly average and leaders have successfully reversed a rise in persistent absence so that now few pupils regularly miss school.

The school provides pupils with a broad and balanced curriculum. Pupils say that they enjoy the work they do across a wide range of subjects and are developing good, subject-specific skills such as using source material in history. The curriculum is enhanced effectively with topic-linked trips to places including the Imperial War Museum and the Roman remains in Chester. Pupils also benefit from a varied programme of extra-curricular clubs, ranging from art and drama to cookery and

martial arts. The school very effectively promotes pupils' physical health and fitness, and sports provision is a strength of the school. Good links have been made with the local secondary school, and through these pupils are able to access sports such as netball, tennis and cross-country running.

Your work to address the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection report has been very largely successful. This is particularly the case with improvements in early years, where children now have far more opportunities to develop their reading and writing skills. The proportion of children reaching a good level of development has improved annually to be broadly in line with other schools nationally, which represents good progress from children's starting points. You have also improved the overall effectiveness of governance. Governors are impressively reflective and have undertaken training assiduously to increase their knowledge and understanding. They are now holding leaders to account more effectively, for example by very effectively checking the impact of additional funding.

Leaders have a clear and accurate picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses. You know that there is still more work to be done to increase the proportion of pupils reaching the highest levels because some teachers have been slower than others in increasing the speed and level of challenge they pose for most-able pupils. You have also recognised that progress in reading needs to be accelerated, and have made this the school's top improvement priority.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has made sure that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that there is a strong culture of safeguarding across the school. Rigorous checks are made on staff, governors and volunteers to ensure that they are suitable people to work with pupils. These checks are recorded meticulously. Staff and governors receive regular training to keep their knowledge of good practice in safeguarding up to date. Staff know exactly what they must do if they are worried about a pupil's welfare and leaders make sure that any such concerns are quickly followed up. The school works closely with external agencies to ensure that pupils and families receive the support that they need.

Pupils say that they feel safe in school and know that their teachers will look after them if they are worried about anything. All of the parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, confirmed that their children were safe and well looked after in school. Pupils have a clear understanding of different aspects of personal safety, including how to make sure that they stay safe on the internet. They recognise the potential dangers of cyber bullying but say that bullying in their school is rare, and that teachers are quick to deal with any incidents that do occur.

Inspection findings

- The inspection focused on a number of key lines of enquiry. The first looked at how effective the teaching and leadership of reading is, as pupils' attainment and progress in reading in key stage 2 in 2017 were weak, and reading attainment in

key stage 1 was also below average.

- Leaders have recognised this issue, and have taken swift and decisive action. They quickly realised that pupils' ability to infer and deduce meaning from text was weaker than their ability to simply retrieve information. As a result, teachers are making sure that they directly teach the skills of inference and deduction so that pupils' reading comprehension improves. Leaders have overhauled the school's approach to teaching guided reading so that it is more focused on developing key skills. This was clear in the guided reading sessions that I visited, where teachers and teaching assistants were skilfully using questions to draw out pupils' understanding of well-chosen texts.
- The school's assessment information, work in pupils' books and reading-focused discussions that I held with pupils all confirm that current pupils are making much stronger progress in reading than in the last school year. Improvements in the effectiveness of guided reading, a higher profile for reading throughout the school and an increase in opportunities for pupils to read purposefully across the curriculum have all had a positive impact. There is still room for further improvement. Although the teaching of reading has improved significantly overall, some reading activities that are set as part of reading sessions are of a low level and do little to develop pupils' skills or reading stamina.
- My second line of enquiry looked at phonics provision in the school. There have been large fluctuations in the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check, and outcomes in phonics in 2017 were well below average. To some degree, the inconsistency in results in the Year 1 phonics screening check can be explained by variations between different cohorts of pupils. For example, some year groups contain significantly higher proportions of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities and whose progress in phonics is slower. However, this is not the only factor.
- The leader for English is knowledgeable and has a clear picture of the areas to focus on in reading and writing. There is less clarity in phonics, where there is a system of shared leadership. This has led to a less consistent approach to the teaching and tracking of pupils' progress in phonics. For example, staff supplement their teaching with materials from different commercial phonics programmes, and teachers' expectations and pupils' rates of progress vary between year groups. While most current Year 1 pupils are working at the expected standard in phonics, there are still too many whose progress is not as quick as it could be. Equally, although a number of Year 2 pupils have made strong progress in phonics this year, some are still struggling to catch up fully.
- The final focus of the inspection looked at how well the school meets the needs of its most-able pupils. This is an area that leaders have worked on following the previous inspection, and it is clear that this work has had a positive impact overall. In mathematics, pupils in Years 5 and 6 in particular are regularly challenged to use their skills and knowledge to solve complex problems and then to explain their reasoning. Similarly, the older, most-able readers choose to read challenging texts such as 'The Boy in the striped pyjamas' and talk about their reading habits and preferences maturely and thoughtfully. School tracking information confirms that the proportion of pupils working at the higher

standards in each year group is beginning to increase. However, there are still inconsistencies. In some classes and some subjects the most able pupils are too often set tasks that lack challenge and so fail to move their learning on quickly.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to refine the school's revised approach to guided reading so that it has the maximum impact on pupils' progress
- they review arrangements for the leadership of phonics to ensure greater consistency in phonics teaching and learning
- all teachers share the same high expectations that are evident in most classes.

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

Yours sincerely

Neil Dixon
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this short inspection I met with you, other school leaders, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority. I met a group of teaching and support staff and considered 36 responses to the staff survey. I considered 52 responses from parents to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including 'free-text' comments. I met with a group of pupils and took account of 72 responses to the pupil questionnaire. I heard a number of pupils read. I visited classes in the early years, key stage 1 and key stage 2, and I looked at examples of pupils' work. I also looked at a range of documentation covering different aspects of the school's work.