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Mr Mark Griffiths
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Griffiths

Short inspection of Newton Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 7 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 March 2013.

This school continues to be good.

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

Together with your colleagues and the support of your governors, you lead a school in which pupils are happy and keen to learn. Governors work closely with the school and provide effective support and challenge, acting as necessary critical friends. Pupils settle into school quickly and, because of good teaching overall, make strong progress and leave school well prepared for the next stage of their learning and education.

Pupils are proud of their school. They say the school is good because of 'all the brilliant teachers, good diversity and lots of trips'. There are mutually respectful relationships between pupils and adults. Pupils told me that behaviour is 'very good' in and around school and that they have lots of responsibilities and are motivated to work very hard to achieve the 'merit' awards.

The overwhelming majority of parents and carers I spoke to or who responded to Ofsted's questionnaire, Parent View, were positive about the school. They commented on the positive atmosphere and that pupils and parents are 'taken seriously'. They say that they would recommend the school unreservedly because the teachers are approachable, relationships are strong, pupils are happy and they learn well. However, a small minority of parents commented that interaction between the school and parents is an area for improvement. Notwithstanding that,

the prevailing attitude was summed up by one parent who commented that the school was '... brilliant. My son springs and bounds into school'.

You have accurately judged the school to be good. Your reasons are set out in a detailed self-evaluation document including information about the achievement of pupils over time and for each cohort. As a result, you have created an effective school development plan which sets out appropriate key improvement priorities to move the school on further. For example, you have correctly identified writing and mathematics as key priorities for those pupils who are most-able and those who are disadvantaged, including the most able disadvantaged pupils.

You continue to attend successfully to most of the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. We saw together good examples of pupils working independently to solve mathematical problems, as well as pupils responding effectively to feedback from teachers. However, we also saw examples where some pupils, especially the most able, were not making the progress of which they were capable. You and your governors are aware of this and are prioritising actions to improve these aspects rapidly.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your staff ensure that pupils are safe. Pupils echo this and add that they are happy and well cared for. All safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and record-keeping is secure. All staff receive appropriate training in safeguarding and understand their responsibility to report any concern immediately. You work with external agencies as necessary and are persistent when there are concerns about a pupil's welfare.

The pupils at your school know how to keep themselves safe. They are taught to be safe online and know that if they have any worries they can tell a trusted adult or use the 'worry box'. Pupils are adamant that bullying is rare and they are confident that, if there were any issues, these would be dealt with effectively.

Governors understand their responsibilities in overseeing and monitoring the effectiveness of safeguarding. The strong, positive relationships with parents ensure that there is a good level of trust and mutual respect. Parents overwhelmingly recommend the school, saying it is a 'kind, friendly and considerate' place to learn. The vast majority of parents concur with the sentiment that their children feel safe in this school.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection, I focused predominantly on how well most-able pupils and disadvantaged pupils, including the most able disadvantaged, are progressing in writing and mathematics. A positive feature in the teaching and learning we observed was the effective modelling by teachers and assistants. This direct instruction enabled the pupils to work towards achieving the goal of the lesson, making gains in their learning.

- We saw children effectively developing their writing skills in the early years, secure in their pencil grips, and we observed more challenge for a few higher-ability children who were encouraged to develop and join their cursive writing. In key stage 1, we saw pupils working independently to solve lots of problems involving money, where they were well supported, as necessary, by both the class teacher and teaching assistant. In key stage 2, we witnessed good mathematical reasoning being developed and deepened. Pupils rose to this challenge, explaining their understanding correctly. We also saw strong evidence that pupils take pride in their work.
- Scrutiny of work in pupils' books highlighted some variation in the teaching of pupils' writing skills, especially for the most able pupils, across the school. Pupils are encouraged to write at length and for a range of purposes and for different audiences. You and your leaders are skilful in using the expertise and passion in the school to improve writing. Teachers now regularly learn from each other, good practice is shared and, as a result, pupils generally build on their skills well. For example, improvements in drafting, redrafting and editing skills through guided sessions and effective modelling are beginning to have a positive impact on the quality of pupils' writing. However, you are aware that this is not yet firmly embedded throughout the school. You know that there is scope to enhance the quality of writing in subjects other than English and mathematics.
- I also wanted to investigate why outcomes in mathematics are not as good as in reading, especially for the most able pupils in key stage 2 and disadvantaged pupils across the school. During observations and work scrutiny, we identified that there was limited evidence that the most able pupils were being challenged well enough, given their stronger starting points. Current progress information indicates that improvements are being made. Attainment is strong for these most able pupils at the expected standard, but less so for the higher standards. As a result, you and your leaders are proactively addressing this issue by implementing appropriate strategies. For example, this academic year, you have introduced additional support for a 'greater depth' group, focusing on those pupils who are capable of attaining higher standards in both writing and mathematics. However, you and your leaders acknowledge that this is at an early stage.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- staff take further action to improve the progress and attainment of the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, so that a larger proportion achieve the higher standards more consistently as a result of greater challenge
- developments to raise standards in writing are embedded throughout the school, ensuring that the quality of writing is the same across the curriculum as it is in English.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools

commissioner and the director of children's services for Cheshire West and Chester. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

John Daley
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, leaders for English and mathematics and your finance officer. I met with six representatives of the governing body, including the chair of governors, and I spoke to a representative of the local authority by telephone. I talked with parents at the start of the day and with pupils, both formally and informally.

We visited six classes together, where we observed teaching and learning and looked at the work in some books. I observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around school. I scrutinised several documents, including your self-evaluation, improvement plans, documents relating to safeguarding and governors' minutes.

I took account of 125 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and 68 free-text responses. I also took account of 203 pupils' responses to Ofsted's questionnaire and 40 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.