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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Miss Jillian Talbot
Headteacher
Godinton Primary School
Lockholt Close
Ashford
Kent
TN23 3JR

Dear Miss Talbot

Short inspection of Godinton Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 27 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in May 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since your appointment as headteacher in September 2017, you have built a committed team of leaders who share your vision and drive. Together with governors you form a strong, united team whose members are determined to provide the very best for pupils at Godinton. You have successfully reshaped the vision and values for the school, taking into account the views of pupils, parents and staff. Your accurate understanding of the school is reflected in your good-quality evaluation and improvement plan. The school is held in high regard by parents and carers. All parents spoken to on the day of the inspection had nothing but praise for the school. As one parent commented: 'It's brilliant, I am so pleased that my children attend this school.'

Classrooms are relaxed and purposeful and relationships are warm and supportive. Behaviour is good throughout the school. Suitable plans are in place to support the very few pupils who need support to manage their behaviour. Pupils' personal development has been strengthened through the school's new values and you plan to sharpen your recording systems to give you an even clearer strategic oversight of behaviour. Pupils approach their work with positive attitudes and enjoy school life. They value the many friends they have and describe the school as being full of 'great people'. Pupils also appreciate the school's many day and residential visits. Older pupils spoke excitedly in anticipation of their forthcoming residential visit to an outdoor activities centre.

Since the school became an academy in March 2015, there have been many changes at the school, including changes of staff and leadership. Throughout this

time, the school has continued to provide a good quality of education. However, leaders recognised that, in 2016, pupils' achievement at the end of key stage 2 was not high enough, particularly in reading and writing. Leaders' effective action led to a substantial improvement in pupils' reading and writing in 2017. The majority of pupils in key stage 2 are now making good progress. Nevertheless, you recognise that the proportion of pupils working at greater depth in key stage 2 is not as high as it could be, and have wisely included this in your improvement plan. Following a dip in 2017, you have taken swift action to improve pupils' attainment in key stage 1. However, you acknowledge that there are still some weaknesses in the teaching of phonics in key stage 1. As a result, pupils' progress in this aspect of their learning is not as strong as it could be.

Governors have considerable expertise and make a strong contribution to the school. They have a good understanding of the school's strengths, know where further improvements are needed and hold leaders to account effectively. They visit the school regularly, checking on how well pupils are learning and the effectiveness of the school's improvement plan.

Safeguarding is effective.

There are robust systems in place to keep pupils safe. Leaders and staff know pupils well and are alert to any concerns. Effective training ensures that staff are knowledgeable and clear about their responsibilities, referring any concerns swiftly to you. Where necessary, you refer these concerns to outside agencies and work closely with other professionals to help keep pupils safe. Record-keeping is meticulous and all the necessary pre-employment checks have been completed for staff. Governors ably fulfil their responsibilities by carrying out regular safeguarding checks, including an annual audit.

The school's records show that there are very few incidents of bullying or discriminatory behaviour and any issues are followed up diligently. Pupils feel entirely safe at school, and know that they can always speak to their teachers if they have any worries. They have a sound knowledge of how to keep safe when using the internet. For example, pupils confidently explained that their teachers regularly remind them to report any online concerns immediately to a member of staff. Pupils also appreciate the importance of routines such as fire evacuation drills in helping to keep them safe.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection we agreed to focus on a number of aspects of the school including: safeguarding; the effectiveness of leaders' actions in sustaining key stage 2 pupils' good attainment and the improvements in reading and writing; how well pupils in key stage 1 are learning, particularly in writing; and the effectiveness of the teaching of phonics.
- The school's good-quality action plan sets out the steps leaders are taking to ensure that improvements gained in pupils' key stage 2 attainment are sustained. Leaders have implemented a number of new strategies which are having a

positive impact on pupils' attainment, including a new approach to reading. This is enabling pupils to improve and deepen their understanding of texts, developing skills such as inference and prediction. Good guidance from teachers is improving pupils' responses to questions by shaping their answers, drawing upon evidence in texts.

- You have given greater focus to developing key stage 2 pupils' grammar, punctuation and spelling skills. Teachers now routinely weave these skills into English lessons. We could see this in action on the day of the inspection, when pupils were being challenged to improve sentences by inserting interesting adjectives to create expanded noun phrases. We also saw some examples of high-quality writing in pupils' books and on display. One pupil successfully opened a section of her suspense story by describing the setting: 'Everything was silent, not a sound was to be heard...'. Teachers' good guidance and strong subject knowledge are helping pupils to use a wider range of punctuation and sentence types to strengthen their writing. In addition, you have reviewed and refined the ways in which pupils are grouped.
- You keep a watchful eye on how well pupils are learning and the quality of teaching. Leaders also hold regular progress meetings so that pupils' attainment and learning are continually reviewed. This close monitoring and leaders' effective actions are making sure that improvements to reading and writing in key stage 2 are sustained. However, you acknowledge that, given pupils' high attainment at the end of key stage 1, some of the most able pupils in key stage 2 are not yet achieving as well as they could. You have sensibly made this a priority for improvement so that a higher proportion of the most able pupils attain a greater depth of learning than in the past.
- The school's assessment information and work in pupils' books show that pupils in key stage 1 are making steady gains in their learning in English and mathematics. When we reviewed pupils' work with leaders we could see examples of some pupils making rapid progress in their writing skills. Teachers provide many opportunities for pupils to write for a wide range of purposes, developing their skills and increasing their stamina for writing. Pupils are also developing appropriate calculation skills and applying these to solve simple word problems. However, we agreed that there is some variability in pupils' learning of phonics.
- In 2017, the proportion of pupils who attained the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check was below the national average. Targeted extra support is helping most of those pupils who did not achieve well in Year 1 to catch up. You have taken action to improve pupils' attainment and the quality of phonics teaching through staff training, mentoring and support. You have also adjusted the grouping arrangements for phonics. Despite this work and support, we agreed that the quality of phonics teaching remains too variable.
- During our visits to classes looking at phonics, we could see that some pupils were not challenged enough to build on their prior learning. In other classes, teaching did not fully engage some pupils who found it difficult to maintain their focus during this time. We also agreed that on occasions, errors in pupils' learning are not identified or addressed promptly enough. As a result, some

pupils are not learning as well as they could, particularly low-attaining pupils.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the teaching of phonics is improved so that all groups of pupils make consistently good progress in their skills
- the good-quality work to increase the proportion of pupils working at a greater depth of learning in key stage 2 is sustained and developed further.

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

Yours sincerely

Sue Cox
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Together, we visited all classes to observe pupils' learning, talk to pupils and look at their work in books. I met with you and the two assistant headteachers to discuss the school's self-evaluation. I also met with three middle leaders to discuss pupils' progress and review pupils' work in books. I held a meeting with four members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. I met with a group of ten pupils from Years 2 to 6 and considered the 32 responses to the Ofsted pupil survey. I reviewed the school's pre-employment checks on the suitability of staff to work with children, and other safeguarding information. I also considered a wide range of other documents and school policies, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan. I considered the views of parents through the 98 responses to Ofsted's online survey Parent View and parents' free-text comments, and talked with parents at the start of the school day. I also took into account the 22 responses to Ofsted's confidential staff survey.