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26 April 2018

Mrs Lisa McCloskey
Acting Headteacher
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Dear Mrs McCloskey

Short inspection of Gisburn Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 20 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 October 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in certain areas. This may indicate that the school is improving towards being outstanding. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

Together with staff and governors, you are working with immense passion and determination to ensure that the extremely high standards of pupils remain a priority in all aspects of the school's work. You have been acting headteacher on an interim basis since January 2018 and are skilfully leading the school through a period of change. You are very well supported by committed governors who share your high aspirations for pupils. It is clear that you are raising high expectations across the school, and this is leading to stronger outcomes for pupils. All groups of pupils in all key stages make consistently strong progress and attainment in reading, writing and mathematics from their starting points.

Attainment at the end of key stage 2 was well above average and among the best of schools nationally in 2017. Progress at the end of key stage 2 in reading and mathematics was just as impressive. Even though the school is performing strongly, there is no complacency.

Pupils access a rich and broad curriculum. Displays around the school are vibrant, celebratory and promote a strong appreciation of a variety of cultures and faiths.

For example, beautifully designed clay Canopic jars from Ancient Egypt and papier mâché African masks are strikingly presented. Pupils' work is of a very high standard. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary; they are polite, considerate and friendly towards each other and towards the adults who work with them. Pupils talk with enthusiasm about their time in school and the many aspects of learning they enjoy. Pupils flourish both socially and academically and are a credit to the school and community.

Parents and carers that I met before school were highly positive about the level of care and support provided for their children by the school staff. They are pleased with the nurturing culture of the school and the way in which every child is individually valued. Parents typically informed me that the school is 'an excellent centre of learning with high pastoral care'.

Governors are proud of what the school has achieved. They provide a high level of support and challenge. Governors are currently focused on appointing a permanent headteacher. The recruitment process has been rigorous due to the governors' commitment to securing the continued high standards and quality of learning for pupils at the school. The English and mathematics subject leaders are new to their roles and you have identified that they will require support and training to maintain the high outcomes for pupils.

Leaders have supported the school to maintain and further develop the strengths identified in the previous inspection report and have achieved the recommendations for improvement. Teachers have higher expectations of their pupils and the most able pupils now make rapid progress due to high-quality teaching. Teachers seek out independent learning opportunities for pupils and encourage them to persevere when learning becomes challenging. Pupils in key stage 1 make strong progress and build on prior achievements. Leaders' rigorous monitoring ensures that all groups of pupils achieve high standards from their starting points.

Leaders were also asked to raise the attainment of boys in writing in key stage 2. Leaders have focused on providing boy-friendly reading material to inspire writing and promote boys' enthusiasm for writing. Writing outcomes, including boys' attainment in writing, were well above the national average in 2017 at the expected and higher standards. However, you recognise that further work is needed on ensuring that pupils have opportunities to review and correct any errors in their writing, as this is a necessary step in building on the current success of pupils' writing. Teachers do not always use the opportunities to extend high-quality writing skills across the broader curriculum.

Standards at the end of the early years are equally well above the national average in all aspects of learning for all groups of children. However, you acknowledge that the outcomes for pupils in the phonics screening check in Year 1, although in line with the national average, could be higher given the starting points of pupils.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding arrangements are effective and fit for purpose. The school site is secure. Safeguarding records and all checks on the suitability of staff who work with children are thorough.

All members of staff have received relevant safeguarding training and know what to do if they have a concern. Safeguarding is high on the agenda of regular staff meetings, and this enables you to review procedures in school regularly and make changes where necessary. Governors receive annual safeguarding training.

Pupils are clear about what the school does to keep them safe. They talk knowledgeably about e-safety and understand some of the potential risks of using the internet. Pupils understand the different forms of bullying but told me that bullying is very rare in the school. They were confident that they could rely on members of staff to resolve any worries or concerns that they may have.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection, we met together to confirm the key lines of enquiry which would form the basis of the focus for my day in school. The school presents a very strong set of improving data with no identified weaknesses in the early years, key stage 1 or key stage 2. This data provided an opportunity to consider the potential strengths of the school alongside adding further challenge to the already excellent outcomes for pupils.
- The first line of enquiry considered pupils' writing progress. This was because the data showed that pupils' progress, although high, was historically slightly lower in writing than in reading and mathematics. We looked at pupils' workbooks and saw that there was a high level of challenge for pupils in writing and progress was clearly evident in books. These same high standards and application of writing skills were evident in report writing in science. However, you agreed that teachers did not have consistently high expectations of pupils' writing across the broader curriculum, for example in history and geography. We also agreed that providing greater opportunities for pupils to evaluate their writing is a positive step in building on the current success of pupils' written work.
- The second line of enquiry looked at pupils' strong progress and attainment, particularly at the end of key stage 2 in reading and mathematics. When we observed lessons, we saw how eager pupils are to meet the challenges set by the class teacher. Pupils are developing strong problem-solving skills and enjoy discussing their mathematical thinking. Pupils also read a wide range of good-quality texts. These reading experiences are then harnessed as models to launch into writing. Highly motivated pupils, eager to learn, are the result of stimulating focused learning opportunities provided by teachers across the school.
- As part of the second line of enquiry, I met with the subject leaders of English and mathematics, as they are relatively new to their roles. They have quickly established a clear picture of strengths and areas they would like to improve further across the school. They are enthusiastic and keen to develop the provision for their subjects within the curriculum. For example, both are eager to

extend work with a local cluster of schools to develop joint work moderation across all year groups. You know that subject leaders require training and support in their new roles in order to maintain the effectiveness of their subjects and sustain the current high level of performance of pupils. Leaders have identified appropriate training and support for subject leaders new to post.

- The final line of enquiry looked at the provision of phonics in early years and Year 1. This was because outcomes for pupils in the phonics screening check, although slightly above national outcomes, did not appear to build on their impressive reading success at the end of the early years. Observations and written work seen during the inspection showed that pupils use and apply their phonics skills effectively across a range of subjects. For example, as we entered the Reception classroom, children were desperate to share their writing with us. A range of non-fiction books on animals had inspired their writing. Children take part in daily phonics sessions and are eager to apply their knowledge. We discussed the need to ensure consistently high standards in the way phonics is taught to ensure that pupils make the best possible progress. You have already strengthened the approach to phonics in the Reception Year and are monitoring the impact of this appropriately.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- appoint a permanent headteacher and finalise their search for new leadership in order to build on the continued success of the school
- ensure that pupils have greater opportunities evaluate their own writing
- provide training and support to the relatively new English and mathematics subject leaders to assure the continued effectiveness of their role in maintaining the high standard of pupils' outcomes
- continue to evaluate and review the effectiveness of the teaching of phonics to build on the successful outcomes at the end of the foundation stage.

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

Gaynor Rennie
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you, other members of the school staff, the chair of governors and three other members of the governing body. I also spoke with a representative of the local authority. Together, you and I planned the key lines of enquiry for the inspection. We jointly visited classes in the school to observe pupils'

learning, spoke with pupils and looked at their books. I spoke with pupils at different points throughout the day. I spoke with parents at the start of the school day and considered 64 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire Parent View, including 61 written contributions by parents. We jointly carried out an analysis of pupils' work. I looked at a range of documentation, including safeguarding and attendance data. I also discussed the school's tracking of pupils' progress and attainment, the school's self-evaluation and plans for improvement.