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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
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Mrs Louise Simmonds
Headteacher
The Gainsborough Charles Baines Community Primary School
Baines Road
Gainsborough
Lincolnshire
DN21 1TE

Dear Mrs Simmonds

Short inspection of The Gainsborough Charles Baines Community Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 18 April 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 2014.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

Since becoming headteacher in January 2017, you have wasted no time in gaining an accurate understanding of the school's strengths, along with addressing many of the weaker aspects of provision. You explained to me, for example, how teaching over time was not consistently good enough to ensure that pupils in the 2016 Year 6 cohort had sufficient knowledge and skills to meet the raised expectations of the revised national curriculum. As a result, pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics was in the lowest 10% of all schools nationally. Barely one in four of these pupils left the school with the combined expected standard.

You set about improving the quality of teaching in order to drive up pupils' outcomes. You noted that the weakest attainment was in mathematics and, to a lesser extent, reading. Sensibly, you ensured that these two subjects received the greatest attention. You organised extensive training for staff in mathematics and made sure that teachers' planning included more opportunities for word-based problem solving. As a result, the progress of pupils in mathematics increased considerably last year and was broadly in line with the national average. Pupils are now more confident, and have higher skills in this subject. The proportions of pupils who are attaining both the expected standard and that of a greater depth of understanding are rising. However, attainment in mathematics remains below the national average. This is because teachers in key stage

2 are not yet giving pupils sufficient opportunities for them to explain in writing why they are reaching the answers they are. Pupils' achievement in reading is improving. Staff have increased pupils' enjoyment of books through a new library and incentives to read, such as a reward scheme. Pupils I met during my visit told me how much they like to read, and how this scheme encourages them to read frequently both in school and at home, so they can receive a free book as a prize. Better teaching of reading means that pupils' ability to comprehend and respond to texts is now greater.

You, and the governing body, are very aware that pupils' achievement in writing remains too low. For example, only about half of the pupils in last year's Year 6 cohort attained the expected standard in writing, and only a very small proportion attained the higher standard. A new scheme for writing has meant that pupils are much more enthusiastic to write. Teachers ensure that they are giving work to pupils that requires them to write in a wide variety of genres and for a range of different purposes and audiences. Pupils are also encouraged to use a wider range of vocabulary, as well as to edit and improve their work. However, pupils' progress in key stage 2 is not consistently fast enough because they do not apply the grammar, spelling and punctuation skills teachers have taught them when they compose their writing. In addition, not all teachers in key stage 2 ensure that pupils write at length in different subjects. As a result, not enough pupils are working at the expectations for their age. You have also introduced a new scheme to improve handwriting. While this is proving popular, the work of some pupils in key stage 2 remains rushed and it does not reflect the high expectations you have for pupils' outcomes.

You have attended effectively to most of the areas for improvement from the last inspection. Pupils, overall, are moved on to harder tasks sufficiently quickly, and teachers expect them to complete good amounts of work. You and senior leaders check regularly on the quality of pupils' work, and involve the governing body in your monitoring processes so they can hold you to account for the progress pupils make. You ensure that leaders support well those teachers who are new to the profession, so their assessment of pupils' work is accurate. Subject leaders are effective because they have a precise view of where teaching is best, and what aspects need to be improved so that progress is rapid and attainment rises.

The school is a calm and positive place. Pupils are keen to answer questions and to show visitors the work they are doing. Parents and carers who responded to Parent View were overwhelmingly positive, with 96% of them stating that they would recommend the school to others. Staff who responded to Ofsted's questionnaire strongly believe you are addressing the school's weaknesses and they feel proud to be part of the team.

The 'nurture class' is a very effective provision which is helping pupils who attend it to cooperate and manage their own feelings. I saw how the approach of staff is supportive and very positive. Nevertheless, pupils are challenged in their work because staff give them tasks that make them think hard.

You are aware that too many pupils in the school remain persistently absent. This is hampering their progress because they miss lessons and do not learn the skills they

need.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Staff are trained well in safeguarding, and could explain to me without hesitation a wide range of signs that could indicate a child is being abused. They understand fully their responsibility to report immediately any concern. Case files that I examined during my visit show that you and your team work tirelessly to support the many vulnerable pupils in your school, and their families. You involve a wide variety of external agencies in this process, so that the risk of harm is minimised. When you commenced at the school, you noted that there were too many incidents of physical restraint of pupils. You have improved greatly the support provided for pupils who find it difficult to control their own behaviour. As a result, instances of restraint have reduced dramatically.

The many pupils I met confirmed to me that incidents of bullying or name-calling are very infrequent. They told me how staff will deal with any issues quickly and fairly, and that they can always approach an adult in school if they are concerned about anything. Pupils also explained to me how you and the staff teach them about a range of risks to their safety, and particularly well about how to stay safe online. Pupils with whom I spoke could explain clearly what they must do if they ever receive a picture or message that worries them from, for example, a mobile phone or a computer.

Inspection findings

- On this inspection, I investigated why progress in writing has been significantly below average in key stage 2 for the past two years. I examined the reasons for the low attainment of pupils leaving the school at the end of Year 6 in 2016 and 2017, and how teaching needs to be improved so greater proportions of pupils achieve the expected standards and the higher standards. I explored the governing body's monitoring of exclusions, along with the negative trend in the persistent absence of pupils.
- While pupils make sufficient gains in their writing in the early years and key stage 1, their progress is not quick enough in key stage 2. Pupils across the school are keen to write, and they have a better understanding of both grammar and punctuation. Their spelling is also improving. However, not all pupils in key stage 2 routinely apply their knowledge of these aspects when they write.
- Not all teachers in key stage 2 give pupils sufficient opportunities to write at length in subjects other than English. Pupils' books I examined during my visit, from pupils in different year groups, show that some teachers do not plan for or expect pupils to complete much writing in, for example, history or geography.
- Staff have introduced a new scheme for teaching handwriting that is proving popular with pupils. Staff are giving pupils 'pen licences' when they have demonstrated that their writing is neat. However, too many pupils in key stage 2 who are not using a pen are rushing their work. They do not take sufficient care when they write.
- Until the last academic year, the level of persistent absence was below the national average. However, in 2017, it increased to considerably higher than that found in

other schools nationally. Although leaders have taken a number of steps to address this issue, these actions have not proved sufficiently effective to reduce this level significantly. As a result, around one in eight pupils continues to be persistently absent from school.

- Leaders ensure that they keep exclusion of pupils to a minimum and any decision to remove a pupil from school, even for a fixed term, is used as a last resort. The governing body monitors closely all exclusions from school. Governors explained to me how the effective management of pupils' behaviour by leaders and by staff is resulting in the rate of exclusions continuing to fall.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- Pupils in key stage 2 make faster progress, and therefore attain more highly, by:
 - consistently applying the writing the skills they are learning in grammar, punctuation and spelling
 - having sufficient opportunities to write at length across the curriculum
 - completing their writing with sufficient care and pride
 - receiving regular tasks from all teachers to reason mathematically.
- The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent is reduced so it is closer to the national average.

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

Yours sincerely

Roary Pownall
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and shared my lines of enquiry. I also met with members of the governing body, an assistant headteacher, the subject leaders for English and mathematics, and the leader with responsibility for pupils who have 'team around the child' status. I considered the responses of parents to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and all free-text comments. I scrutinised the responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for staff. We visited classes together throughout the school and I looked at samples of pupils' work. I observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and met with a large group of them at breaktime. I viewed a range of documents, including leaders' evaluation of the school's current performance and its plans for further improvement. I considered a number of policy documents, including those for safeguarding. I examined the school's website to check that it meets requirements on the publication of specified

information.