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Mrs Lisa Bates
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Bates

Short inspection of Gorse Hill Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 11 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 July 2014.

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 other leaders, you have created a happy and caring community in which the whole school team works hard to ensure that all pupils have a well-rounded education. Pupils make good progress in most aspects of their school life. You provide strong leadership and have shown great determination to further improve the school. You know the school well and your evaluation of strengths and areas that need further improvement are accurate. Your school development plan ties in closely with your evaluation and it identifies appropriate actions to ensure further sustained improvement. For example, you acknowledge that improvements to the teaching of writing need to be built upon further to ensure that the most able pupils make faster progress. You also recognise the need to strengthen some of your systems for encouraging good attendance in order to further reduce rates of absence.

Your passion and vision for the school is shared by all. There is a commitment to the school motto of 'working together to do our best', which is embedded in all aspects of school life. The school's distinctive ethos and strong values underpin your day-to-day work and provide the school community with a strong moral purpose. All leaders and staff work in unison to drive improvements with a strong sense of teamwork. Staff feel motivated and respected. They spoke positively about the support you give them and how your leadership has helped to move the school forward. The middle leader who has responsibility for improving the quality of subject leadership has begun to develop the effectiveness of those who have responsibility for coordinating teaching in different subjects. As a result, improved

subject leadership is leading to more effective teaching across the curriculum and better outcomes for pupils. This is evident, for example, in the improved teaching and outcomes in reading.

You have ensured that the school's strengths have been built upon since the previous inspection. Pupils continue to be very happy and enjoy their learning. Their behaviour is excellent and they are polite and courteous towards others. You have continued to provide pupils with an impressive array of opportunities to enrich the curriculum through trips, special 'theme weeks' and visitors. For example, pupils in Year 5 were excited to embark upon a residential outward-bound trip during my visit. Physical education continues to be a strength of the school's work and pupils are very proud of their success when representing their school in inter-school sporting tournaments. As a result of these strengths, parents and carers continue to be wholly supportive of the school. They feel valued and appreciate leaders' actions to ensure that they play an integral role in their children's education.

The governors of the school are totally committed to the pupils. The governing body has a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Governors know how well the school is doing compared to other schools nationally. They are passionate about their roles, are regular visitors to the school and ensure that you and your team are held to account for the school's continued improvement.

You have been partially successful in addressing the areas for improvement that were identified during the previous inspection. At the last inspection leaders were asked to improve pupils' progress in writing. In particular, the progress of the most able pupils was raised as a concern. You have implemented a coordinated strategy for improving the teaching of writing. For example, teachers now provide pupils of different abilities with clear guidance on how to improve the quality of their writing from their different starting points. Teachers deliberately plan lessons that aim to fire pupils' enthusiasm and increase their enjoyment of writing. For example, in one class we saw pupils using their knowledge of volcanoes when writing a report. You have also ensured that greater attention is given to the development of pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar. For example, pupils are provided with routine opportunities to edit their own work, with a clear focus on improving the technical accuracy of their writing. Teachers also provide pupils with regular opportunities to develop their writing in a range of subjects.

As a result of these actions, pupils are making stronger progress in their writing. In 2017, for example, the proportion of pupils attaining the expected standard in writing improved in both key stages. Despite this, teaching has not improved for the most able as consistently as it has for other groups. When we visited classes and looked at books, there was some good evidence to indicate that more pupils are working at greater depth. However, we also identified that teachers do not consistently challenge the most able pupils as effectively as other groups. As a result, you recognise that teachers' expectations of what the most able pupils are capable of achieving can increase further so these pupils are provided with greater challenge during lessons.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. There is a culture of high vigilance and the safeguarding of pupils is of paramount importance to all staff and governors. You manage the arrangements for keeping pupils safe very well. The arrangements for checking the suitability of staff meet statutory requirements. All staff undergo regular and relevant training in all aspects of safeguarding. This enables staff to identify concerns quickly and take brisk action with confidence. Staff carry out detailed risk assessments and regular checks to ensure that the school remains a safe place. Regular opportunities for leaders to discuss safeguarding with governors ensure that the school continues to take its responsibilities for keeping pupils safe very seriously.

Pupils say that they feel safe in school and know that they can speak to a teacher if they have a concern. Pupils' online safety is a key priority for you and pupils know what to do to keep safe when using the internet. Many visitors, including the police and fire service, provide informative talks on safety. Pupils understand their own responsibility to help keep themselves safe.

Inspection findings

- As part of the inspection we looked at the quality of provision for disadvantaged pupils and whether pupil premium funding is being used effectively to maximise the progress of these pupils. You have worked with your leadership team to ensure that there are regular checks on the quality of provision for the disadvantaged pupils. You use this information to ensure that all teachers improve aspects of their performance so that they meet the needs of these pupils. This was evident during our visits to classrooms and when we looked at work in pupils' books.
- You use additional funding in a resourceful way and this makes a real difference to the progress of disadvantaged pupils. You ensure that the large numbers of disadvantaged pupils receive appropriately tailored pastoral and academic support. Additional support is provided for all disadvantaged pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and the most able. This was evident in our visits to classrooms, where we saw disadvantaged pupils of different abilities being supported effectively by teaching assistants. Regardless of pupils' ability, the teaching assistants prompted and encouraged these pupils to make impressive gains in their learning. Consequently, disadvantaged pupils now make consistently good progress across the school.
- The final line of enquiry was to consider the actions you have taken to improve pupils' attendance, which was particularly low last year. You put in place rewards for good attendance and monitor pupils' absence carefully. This enables you to keep a close eye on pupils whose attendance dips so that you can act before absence becomes persistent. Pupils particularly enjoy celebrating good attendance in assembly and said that they enjoy coming to school. Pupils' attendance is improving.

- Both the attendance officer and the well-being coordinator provide effective support for families when absence becomes a problem. There have been some significant individual successes. However, there is still a small group of families who persist in taking their children on extended holidays in term time and this is lowering your overall rates of attendance.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- further improve the quality of pupils' writing so that a greater proportion of pupils in both key stage 1 and 2 achieve greater depth
- continue to improve pupils' overall attendance by focusing on the small number of families who persist in taking unauthorised holidays during term time.

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

Yours sincerely

Andrew Morley
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, your deputy headteacher and the middle leader who is responsible for English and the development of subject leadership. Together, we met the learning mentor who is responsible for attendance. I held a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority and met with six members of the governing body. I gathered the views of parents through responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I also met with a group of pupils who spoke to me about their experiences of school. Together with your deputy headteacher, we observed learning across the school and looked at examples of pupils' work. I scrutinised a variety of documents, including the school's own evaluation of its performance and plans for improvement. I scrutinised safeguarding policies and practice, including systems for the safe recruitment of staff.