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Mrs Janette Gregg
Headteacher
Gorsewood Primary School
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Dear Mrs Gregg

Short inspection of Gorsewood Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 9 May 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 April 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You know your school well and are accurate in your judgement of where Gorsewood Primary is on its improvement journey. Governors and the local authority adviser agree that the school has continued to improve under your committed, determined and collaborative leadership. The school has many strengths, including pupils' good behaviour, your and your staff team's commitment to the welfare and care of pupils and their families and the progress pupils make.

You, your leadership team, staff and governors have developed a welcoming and warm feel to the school, with strong relationships between staff, pupils and their families. There is a real and tangible family ethos, and all members of the school community recognise the sensitive and sympathetic approach to partnership working. Leaders are determined to raise aspirations for all pupils. The nurturing and inclusive ethos is a key factor in breaking down barriers to pupils' learning. As a result, current pupils are making good and improving progress.

The learning environment is purposeful and calm. Pupils are polite and well mannered. They stated that they enjoy lessons; they appreciate the element of fun that teachers provide. Pupils value the variety of extra-curricular activities, including trips and various sports clubs. Parents and carers feel that the school is very good at both nurturing their children and developing them academically. A parent said, 'Children's needs are spotted and acted on quickly.' Others agreed, stating that this

school is 'the best'. Parents spoke positively about the smooth transition into the Reception class, especially your involvement in the home visits.

You and your team have largely taken effective action to address the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. You were asked to ensure that the most able pupils are given work which is appropriately challenging. The school's key stage 2 results in last year's national tests show a rise in the numbers of pupils reaching the higher standards in reading and mathematics. Increasing numbers of teachers intervene well to provide harder work for those pupils who have already grasped the aspects being taught. However, I agree with you that there is still more that could be done to challenge key stage 1 and 2 pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, to achieve at greater depth and higher standards.

You were also asked to ensure that pupils are clear about how to improve their work. Pupils receive regular feedback and are given opportunities to reflect on their learning. This is evident when looking at pupils' books, which show that they are improving the content, spelling and grammar of their writing.

In most classes, teachers plan work which matches their assessments of pupils' learning needs. Teachers' effective questioning supports and challenges pupils to achieve well. However, in some classes, pupils have to wait for teachers to identify next steps, so time is wasted and the pace of learning slows.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Safeguarding procedures are fit for purpose and are sensitively deployed according to staff's knowledge of individual families. Leaders and governors fulfil statutory requirements when appointing new members of staff.

Parents and pupils feel that the school is a safe place to be. Leaders, including governors, ensure that staff receive high-quality training. As a result, staff know how to recognise the signs and symptoms of abuse. Staff are very clear about the school's procedures for reporting and recording any concerns they have regarding the safeguarding of pupils. Leaders are tenacious, but sympathetic, in their work to protect vulnerable pupils.

Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe. Leaders have implemented clear programmes to teach pupils about personal and internet safety. Pupils understand the dangers associated with internet use and report concerns to staff.

Inspection findings

- Attainment and progress have steadily improved over the last few years because of your and your leadership team's resolve to develop the quality of teaching and learning. Consequently, results have improved by the end of key stage 2, particularly in reading and mathematics, and to a lesser degree in writing. My first line of enquiry, therefore, was to find out what you have done to improve

writing across key stage 2. You and your leadership team have given writing a strong profile in school. Pupils' writing is displayed and celebrated around school. In classrooms, displays of prompts and ideas help pupils improve their writing. A range of training for teachers has had a positive impact on the quality of pupils' writing. The revised approach to the teaching of writing has resulted in higher expectations of what pupils can achieve. Pupils are expected to draft and edit their own writing and use grammar accurately.

- The work in pupils' books indicates improving progress over time. Pupils are developing a growing understanding of a wider range of sentence structures. They use a wider variety of punctuation, alongside effective sentence structures and vocabulary, to create appropriate effects in a range of different types of writing. Leaders' focus on handwriting is evident in the improved presentation of pupils' work. Older pupils are able to sustain their ideas over longer pieces of writing and make good links across paragraphs. Rightly, you are now turning your attention to ensuring that as many pupils as possible, including disadvantaged pupils, achieve at greater depth in writing.
- My second line of enquiry was to find out more about the progress and attainment of pupils in key stage one. We discussed the very particular learning needs of the Year 2 cohort last year and the impact these had on the 2017 results. Leaders offered compelling evidence to explain the end of key stage 1 outcomes for this group of pupils. You have implemented a programme of interventions and a higher level of support from teaching assistants to help this cohort achieve as they progress through key stage 2.
- In key stage 1, pupils make good progress in reading because teachers provide a varied programme, which includes individual support, opportunities to read during the day and guided reading sessions. In mathematics lessons, teachers plan work which is focused on pupils' identified needs. Teachers' explanations enable pupils to understand new ideas and answer questions confidently. Pupils' books show that their writing develops well over time. Teachers' clear and focused emphasis on improving vocabulary and description means that pupils now write accurately in detail and at increasing length. The current assessment information for key stage 1 pupils shows that the majority are on track to attain in line with the expected level for pupils of the same age nationally in reading, writing and mathematics. However, you are now focusing your attention on ensuring that pupils achieve all they are capable of at greater depth.
- For my third line of enquiry, I looked at what leaders are doing to improve attendance, especially of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. Effective monitoring of attendance and specific approaches taken with individual families have improved rates of attendance and punctuality. Incentives, including gold, silver and bronze awards, reward pupils for high levels of attendance and result in cinema experiences for those pupils with appropriately high attendance. These, together with targets for improved attendance, are having a positive impact on attendance rates for all groups of pupils. Consequently, attendance rates are improving towards national averages.
- Finally, I investigated how effectively leaders use the pupil premium funding to

enable disadvantaged pupils to make good progress and attain well. Leaders provide a wonderful range of opportunities for disadvantaged pupils, including 'skills for life'. The pupil premium grant is spent on identified priorities, and governors monitor this well. Leaders provide effective social and emotional support to disadvantaged pupils. Staff, including specialists, provide support to enable these pupils to develop their resilience and to further improve their skills in reading, writing and mathematics. Leaders also provide a wide range of activities which enrich the school's curriculum and give pupils opportunities and experiences such as residential visits, high-quality drama and music. As a result, the progress of disadvantaged pupils is good. Leaders liaise well with other local schools to provide appropriately challenging activities for the more able disadvantaged pupils, but I agree with you that too few of these pupils attain the higher levels.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- continue to raise attainment at greater depth and higher standards by providing greater challenge in lessons, so that all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, achieve all that they are capable of
- check that no time is wasted in lessons and pupils are given time to practise their skills and knowledge.

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

Yours sincerely

Ian Shackleton
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, your staff and members of the governing body. I also met with pupils to seek their views about the school. I spoke on the telephone with a representative from the local authority. I also spoke with pupils informally in the classroom and on the playground.

We observed teaching and learning together in various classes and I scrutinised the writing of pupils across the school and the mathematics of pupils from key stage 1. In addition, I listened to a few pupils read.

I examined and discussed a range of documents, including those relating to attendance and safeguarding. I looked at the school's self-evaluation, improvement

priorities and its assessment information.

I considered the views expressed by parents gathered in the playground before the start of the school day and 23 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. I also considered the 23 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.