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Mrs J Ault
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Ault

Short inspection of Great Harwood Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 12 June 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 June 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Leaders, including governors, use evaluation systems effectively to identify the school's strengths and areas for improvement. You have identified the most appropriate priorities in the school improvement plan. Following the previous inspection, you improved the quality of leadership and management by creating clearly defined roles and responsibilities for staff. You have developed a strong senior leadership team that shares your high expectations and makes a valuable contribution to the improvement of the school.

Governors know the school well and both support and challenge you considerably. They have undertaken training in the analysis of assessment data. Consequently, they have a clear understanding of pupils' progress and attainment. Agendas for meetings focus on the quality of learning and the impact that this has on pupils' outcomes. This enables governors to identify the strategies that are working and those that are not. The local authority has confidence in your leadership skills. As a result, it provides only a 'light-touch' level of support. However, the authority has a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development and has provided training for the governing body. Representatives of the local authority value the contribution of leaders to the recent reading project that took place across several schools.

Parents and carers that I spoke to in the playground, and the majority of those who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, said they are happy with the school. One comment summed up the many positive feelings: 'The school has taught my children

well and encouraged them to be kind and respectful of others. The staff are always kind and approachable and I know that my children have felt cared for and safe at school.'

Pupils' behaviour in lessons and their conduct are strengths of the school. Some older pupils take responsibility for younger ones, such as being reading buddies for children in the Reception Year. Pupils told me they would recommend the school and that they are proud of their work to protect the environment. They told me that one of the school's strengths is how staff, especially the headteacher and the deputy headteacher, make everyone feel welcome.

At the previous inspection you were asked to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. We agreed to look at this as part of the inspection. You were also asked to develop pupils' use of vocabulary, to enable them to write imaginatively and at length. Teachers create opportunities for pupils to write at length in English lessons and practise their writing skills in subjects across the curriculum. For example, in their writing pupils use subject-specific vocabulary such as 'locate' and 'direction' in key stage 1 geography topics. Teachers use the assessment of pupils' progress very effectively when planning teaching. These changes have contributed to an improvement in pupils' progress in writing across the school. However, they are still not achieving the highest standards. This has been recognised by leaders and will continue to be an area for improvement.

During the inspection, we discussed the next steps required to enable the school to improve further. Leaders' own evaluation accurately highlights that further work is required to ensure that leaders build upon the new strategies introduced in English. This is to ensure that the pupils who are capable of achieving the highest standards in reading and writing do so. You have also put in place a new assessment and tracking system. However, for subjects other than English and mathematics this is still being developed. Consequently, some subject leaders do not have a complete overview of pupils' progress in each subject.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You make sure that safeguarding has a very high profile. Safeguarding messages are shared with parents via the newsletter and governors check and review the safeguarding work of the school. Staff ensure that appropriate and timely action is taken to support vulnerable pupils and their families when the need arises. You ensure that checks on adults, before they start to work or volunteer at the school, meet statutory requirements. Leaders keep detailed records of concerns raised by adults and pupils. They take positive action to ensure that pupils get the help that they need.

The majority of parents responding to the Ofsted survey said that their children are safe at school. Pupils know how to stay safe online and told me that they are regularly taught about safety, such as road and water safety. Pupils told me that when there are rare instances of falling out, adults deal with them effectively. There is a culture of care and support which runs throughout the school. This is strengthened by the caring relationships between staff and pupils.

Inspection findings

- We agreed several areas of enquiry for this inspection. The first of these was the effectiveness of actions taken by leaders to improve outcomes in the early years. Planning based on assessment information produces engaging teaching approaches that are based on children's current interests, such as space rockets and caterpillars. There is also a strong focus on developing spoken language through questioning. This ensures that children enjoy participating in activities and children with low prior achievement acquire language skills quickly. Teachers and teaching assistants use their knowledge of what children can and cannot yet do to focus their teaching. Evidence from children's work and from your own assessment information shows that children currently in the early years make good progress, with boys in particular showing a notable improvement in their achievement.
- The next area we looked at was the effectiveness of actions taken by leaders to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. The school's statement on the use of the pupil premium is clear and sets criteria by which success can be measured based on pupils' achievement. Leaders review this provision frequently and adapt support as needed. Examples of pupil premium spending include regular activities that broaden pupils' experiences to bring learning to life. One example of this was having a 'beach' in school that helped to develop vocabulary in writing through good-quality discussion about the experience. The school's current assessment information indicates that these actions have contributed to improving pupils' progress in English and mathematics. Evidence from pupils' books also shows that, across year groups, current progress for this group of pupils is good.
- The next area we looked at was how well you are improving outcomes in phonics. The organisation and consistent delivery of phonics sessions have brought about sustained improvements. The structured phonics programme ensures that all pupils fully participate in the activities provided for them. This allows children to apply their skills effectively in their own reading and writing. Books that are sent home ensure that the sounds learned by pupils in school can be practised at home. As a result, pupils are making accelerated progress.
- Leaders are knowledgeable about the reading process. Teachers are building pupils' vocabulary effectively, including that of the large proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language. Leaders take successful steps to update classroom libraries with carefully selected books and run a book swap, which children told me they enjoy. This is increasing pupils' positive attitudes to reading. Teachers analyse pupils' reading assessments to identify the key reading skills that need strengthening and plan activities that focus on the development of these key skills. This helps pupils to make good progress in reading over time. However, these recent changes have not yet had an impact on significantly increasing the proportion of pupils attaining higher standards in both reading and writing.
- Finally, I explored how pupils are challenged to reach the highest possible standards across the curriculum. Staff use questioning to develop and extend pupils' learning. I also saw examples of pupils using resources and displays in classrooms to find things

out for themselves. Based on guidance given to them by teachers, pupils now improve their own work. Through pupils' progress meetings you are increasing teachers' focus on the most able pupils. As a result, staff now consider much more thoroughly how they will challenge pupils in their work. Successful work with pupils who speak English as an additional language has improved the progress for the most able in this group. There are strong indications that your work is having a positive effect, particularly in mathematics. However, there is more to do in ensuring that all pupils achieve their potential in English.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- all pupils who have the potential to attain higher standards achieve all that they are capable of, particularly in reading and writing
- they continue to develop their new assessment and tracking system for subjects other than English and mathematics, so that leaders of these subjects can contribute more effectively to school improvement.

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

Simon Hunter
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I spoke with pupils, both formally and informally, about their work and school life. I held meetings with you and I also spoke with senior staff to discuss improvements in their areas of responsibility. I looked at learning in pupils' books. I also spoke to the local authority adviser.

I reviewed documentation, which included your evaluation of the school's strengths and areas for improvement and the school development plan. I spoke with parents at the start of the school day and considered 15 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. I also considered 14 responses to the online staff questionnaire.

I visited classes, together with senior leaders, to observe pupils' learning. I met with governors to discuss aspects of school leadership and management. I reviewed a range of documentation about safeguarding, including the school's record of checks undertaken on newly appointed staff.