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Mr Keith Leader
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Leader

Short inspection of Great Ponton Church of England School

Following my visit to the school on 5 December 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 February 2015.

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.**

Although you are addressing shortcomings, some changes are too new to yet see the effect on raising standards, particularly in writing. Your modifications to the curriculum are intended to develop pupils' higher-level skills in reading, writing and mathematics but pupils, especially the most able, are not yet reaching their full potential. You have rightly identified the importance of strengthening the leadership skills of your staff. However, there is some way to go for them to be actively involved in evaluating and improving the quality of teaching.

At the time of the previous inspection, leaders were asked to improve pupils' progress in reading. You are now raising the profile of reading and pupils' attainment is rising. When I spoke to pupils, they said that they like to read frequently and acquire new vocabulary to use in their writing. They spoke highly of the new library area and told me enthusiastically about the stories they read in class.

Pupils said they enjoy school. They value the sports opportunities that you provide and they are proud of their sporting achievements. They said they like playing their part in the school community and they all get on well together. Pupils told me they are improving in mathematics because of the changes you have made to the way in

which the subject is taught.

You and your staff ensure that children in the early years make a good start, which lays the foundations for their learning in Year 1. You have provided relevant training for staff and introduced a consistent approach to the teaching of phonics. As a result, standards in Year 1 are rising. When we visited classes together, we saw pupils working in groups suited to their abilities. Adults provided plenty of opportunity for them to practise and consolidate their learning.

Since your appointment as headteacher, you have worked effectively with the local schools' partnership and external advisers to improve development planning and to evaluate the effectiveness of the school's work. You act upon advice and use expertise from other schools to provide training and support for staff.

Governors are committed to school improvement. They have undertaken a review of their work and are currently increasing their involvement in determining the strategic direction of the school. They check how well the school is moving towards its main priorities and they are sharpening their skills in holding school leaders to account. Governors are frank about the school's strengths and know what could improve.

Safeguarding is effective.

You, together with governors, have modified and evaluated the school's systems to ensure that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You provide staff with the training they need to keep pupils safe. Systems and vetting procedures for adults who work with pupils are thorough and well maintained.

You keep detailed records of any child protection concerns that may arise. You work with families and external agencies to promote pupils' welfare and to reach satisfactory conclusions of any issues.

Pupils say they feel safe. When I asked them about bullying, they said it is not a problem in their school but, if it does happen, they said staff help them to sort any worries they may have. You promote anti-bullying and e-safety through the curriculum and use visitors to the school, such as the NSPCC, to give pupils guidance on how to keep themselves safe.

You provide information on the school's website and offer workshops to parents and carers to help them to understand any potential hazards their children might encounter.

Inspection findings

- In writing, tasks that teachers provide do not build sufficiently well upon what pupils can already do. This limits the amount of progress pupils make in developing well-structured writing and reaching the standards of which they are capable. Staff ensure that pupils write for a range of purposes and there are

some good examples of writing in subjects other than English.

- The level of challenge for the most able pupils is not well enough pitched to ensure that they work securely at greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics. Leaders' actions to modify the curriculum and improve the quality of teaching are resulting in a whole-school focus to extend pupils' learning. This is beginning to improve pupils' reasoning in mathematics and to deepen their comprehension of what they read but the effect on pupils' achievement is not yet clear.
- You and your staff recently reviewed the use of the pupil premium and of the funding provided for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. As a result of this, you have reorganised the support provided for these groups and taken on additional staff to aid pupils' personal, emotional and academic development.
- You are improving the work of subject leaders and the provision for special educational needs and/or disabilities. You are strengthening the role of leaders in checking the effectiveness of the school's work. However, they are not yet fully conversant with the quality of teaching and learning in their subjects and areas of responsibility.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers provide tasks that systematically develop pupils' writing skills in order to raise attainment
- the most able pupils make good progress in acquiring higher-level skills in reading, writing and mathematics
- staff continue to develop their leadership roles in order to gain a good overview of teaching and learning.

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

Yours sincerely

Vivienne McTiffen
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you to discuss the school's information about pupils' progress and the ways in which the quality of teaching is checked. Together, we visited all classes to observe the teaching of English and mathematics. I also met with the leader responsible for English and we looked at a sample of pupils'

writing. I met the chair of the governing body and three other governors. I spoke to pupils during lessons about their learning. I also met with a group of pupils and they showed me examples of their writing. I listened to pupils read and I observed activities at lunchtime. I took into account the 15 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and written comments submitted by parents. I analysed the eight responses to the questionnaire completed by staff and the 20 responses to the pupil survey. I scrutinised the single central record of recruitment checks, looked at documentation relating to safeguarding and discussed the school's safeguarding procedures with you and staff. I looked at the school's self-evaluation and the school development plan, as well as reports from visiting consultants. I also spoke with a representative of the local authority.