

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mr Christopher Latimer
Headteacher
Grange Primary Academy
Dorothy Road
Kettering
Northamptonshire
NN16 0PL

Dear Mr Latimer

Short inspection of Grange Primary Academy

Following my visit to the school on 7 March 2019, 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 March 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since you took up the post as headteacher following the previous inspection, you have successfully developed a 'no excuses' culture in which all pupils are encouraged to do well. Yours is an inclusive school where pupils feel valued. Parents, carers, staff and pupils all commented on your willingness to deal with issues and challenge the school community to improve outcomes for pupils. One parent said, 'such an improved school and pleased my child attends'. In partnership with your deputy headteacher and the United Learning Trust, you have created a strong leadership team, ably managing the considerable turnover in staff over the past two years so that the progress and attainment of pupils have improved since the last inspection.

The learning environment, including the refurbished library, classrooms and outdoor spaces, has been much improved and is greatly appreciated by children, pupils and parents. Parents comment on the school being 'an exciting place to come and learn – try keeping my child away'.

Leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for development. Governors and trust colleagues visit the school regularly and have a range of skills that enable them to provide good challenge and support. All aspects of the school improvement plan are monitored carefully through governor visits and meetings. Governors and staff have taken up a wide range of training opportunities and engage in a wide range of self-evaluation activities when they consider the effectiveness and impact of school improvement activity on pupil outcomes.

High-quality systems for staff development and improvement projects sponsored by the trust have played a key part in the school's success in improving standards since the last inspection. New staff are inducted well, with mentors providing support to those who need it. Teaching assistants receive regular updates and training, which ensures that this group is effective. Teaching assistants were observed providing good-quality support in the classroom.

The behaviours and attitudes of pupils are strengths across the school. Pupils have a range of responsibilities, and the pupil parliament plays an important role in school life. Pupils show care and concern for one another. All the pupils I spoke to said that bullying is very rare or non-existent. Discussions with parents and responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire Parent View support this view. Pupils have good attitudes to learning and stay on task, working hard during lessons. For example, pupils readily selected new mathematics challenges to extend their learning further.

Safeguarding is effective.

Pupils are articulate and appreciative of the ways in which leaders and staff ensure that the Grange Primary Academy is a safe and happy school. Pupils are aware of the dangers of the internet and can articulate the ways in which to keep safe. Parents were confident that the school works hard to ensure their children's emotional and physical well-being.

Staff receive regular safeguarding briefings. Safeguarding policies are up to date, and record-keeping is meticulous. The checks made on the appointment of staff are comprehensive and updated regularly. Any concerns that the school might have are recorded systematically and followed up when necessary.

Leaders, including governors and the trust, ensure that safeguarding arrangements are securely maintained. Staff are highly vigilant about pupils' safety, and leaders act quickly and decisively to protect pupils. Leaders, including the family support worker, are tenacious in ensuring that external agencies provide effective protection when needed.

Inspection findings

- For this inspection, we agreed on a number of key lines of enquiry. The first of these was to examine the progress made since the last inspection, when the school was judged to be good. Despite a large turnover of staff, considerable improvements have been made in the last two years. Last year, progress and attainment in reading, writing and mathematics at key stage 2 were close to the national averages. These results were achieved through a strong focus on developing the quality of teaching, clearly focused school improvement plans and staff development programmes.
- For example, leaders have put in place strategies such as harnessing expertise from external agencies and the trust to improve the quality of teaching in

mathematics. This has resulted in acceleration of pupils' progress since September 2017. In addition, the quality of questioning has improved, so that pupils are given the chance to think about mathematical concepts more fully. The principles of the new curriculum have been fully adopted, so that pupils are given many more opportunities to develop mathematical reasoning and problem solving.

- Disadvantaged pupils are also supported well and make good progress. Last year, disadvantaged pupils at Grange achieved almost as well as non-disadvantaged pupils in reading, writing and mathematics at key stage 2. They did similarly well in key stage 1 and in the early years foundation stage. This is because pupil premium funding provided by the government to support these pupils is used well. Teachers providing one-to-one tuition and teaching assistants leading small groups all play a part in supporting these pupils to make good progress. It remains a priority to diminish differences further between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils, especially in subjects other than English and mathematics.
- In the previous inspection, the most able pupils were identified as a group that needed more consistent challenge, especially in mathematics. You have responded effectively to this area for development, and current mathematics assessment data shows that most-able pupils are doing much better. New systems and curriculum content ensure that lesson planning takes account of the needs of this group of pupils. However, leaders recognise that more needs to be done to improve the progress of the most able pupils and ensure that their work is suitably challenging in all subjects.
- I also checked whether standards in writing were good enough. This was because too few Year 6 pupils achieved greater depth in writing in the results of the 2018 national tests. Scrutiny of their work shows that pupils who have high prior achievement are given many opportunities to develop their knowledge and skills in writing across the curriculum.
- Subject leaders, however, need to check the breadth and depth of writing further, including the quality of handwriting, so that writing is consistently good. There is more work to be done to embed the school's assessment practice and accelerate pupils' progress in subjects other than English and mathematics.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- there is a consistently high level of challenge for the most able, especially in the expectations for depth and sophistication in writing
- work in science and all other subjects demands enough of pupils and helps them to develop a wider range of skills, knowledge and understanding
- successful strategies in English and mathematics to diminish differences between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils continue to be fully embedded across the whole curriculum.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the chair of the board of

trustees, the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Northamptonshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Phil Garnham
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I spoke with you, the deputy headteacher, the assistant headteachers and some subject leaders. I met the regional primary director for the trust and held a telephone conversation with the chair of governors. You and your deputy headteacher joined me on visits to classrooms, where we looked at pupils' work. We also completed a work scrutiny. I spoke with pupils and staff throughout the day. I observed pupils in lessons, before school and at breaktimes. I considered nine responses to the online questionnaire for parents, Parent View. I also took account of six text messages.

I read school documentation, including the school development plan, your own review of the school's effectiveness and information related to safeguarding and pupils' progress.