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Mr John McConnell
Headteacher
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Dear Mr McConnell

Short inspection of George White Junior School

Following my visit to the school on 26 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 predecessor school was judged to be good in 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in specific areas. This may indicate that the school has improved significantly overall. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection will be a section 5 inspection.

You, your senior leadership team and the trustees provide impressive leadership for the school. Your evaluation of the quality of education at the school is stringent and accurate. As a result, you rapidly identify areas for improvement. For example, your analysis of pupils' outcomes showed that girls were not doing as well as boys in mathematics. You and your leadership team found out precisely why this was the case and provided effective training for teachers and teaching assistants. As a result, girls are currently making strong progress in mathematics and are more confident and successful in learning number facts and in solving mathematical problems.

You and senior leaders are passionate about ensuring that every pupil is a confident and capable reader. For example, all staff have been trained to teach phonics. Consequently, pupils who are not secure with phonics when they start at the school rapidly catch up, including pupils placed in the specialist resource base (SRB). In addition, teachers use the computer-based reading system well to ensure that pupils have reading books that they can understand as well as read. Although there are strong systems in place to check and evaluate pupils' progress in reading, the

expectations for how pupils and parents and carers should use reading diaries are not clear.

Staff are exceptionally enthusiastic about working at the school. They have every confidence in you and senior leaders due to the high-quality training and support they receive. One teacher told me: 'There's really effective communication from senior leaders. We have a middle leadership team and everyone understands their roles and responsibilities.' Another teacher explained: 'There's no blame culture in this school. If someone is struggling, we all help them. I really like our approach to research and how we observe and give feedback to each other. It helps me improve my teaching.' Most of the teachers were keen to tell me that: 'Workload is not an issue at this school. We talk about the pupils' learning every day and then we plan how and what we will teach the next day. We no longer have to work at weekends.'

Most parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and all those I spoke to during the inspection were very positive about the strong progress their children make at the school. One parent told me: 'Maths is a really strong subject. My daughter's come on in leaps and bounds because it's fun and builds her confidence.' Another parent talked about her child not being able to read when he started: 'Now he's reading above his age group. The school is really honest with us and with the child about their needs and explains how they will help them improve. Everything here is tailored to meet the needs of the child.'

Most pupils are very happy at school and love the strong friendships they have and their interesting lessons. One pupil told me: 'I really like how the children and teachers have a bond, because children improve a school and the teachers help. Teachers here make learning fun.' Another pupil talked about friendships: 'I like how every child here has a friend and we all help each other. Everyone is always kind to each other and shares and helps.'

The chief executive officer (CEO) and trustees provide strong support and challenge to school leaders, for example through the termly progress boards. These are chaired by the trust's external improvement partner and senior leaders are required to account for the progress pupils are making and the impact of actions they are taking to improve teaching and learning.

Safeguarding is effective.

All your safeguarding policies and procedures meet requirements. Staff receive regular training, and safeguarding is a standing agenda item at staff meetings. Staff are confident to use the recently introduced computer-based safeguarding recording system. The majority have logged concerns and have received helpful feedback on the actions taken by designated safeguarding leads (DSLs) as a result.

The parent support adviser (PSA) and school leaders work effectively with the most vulnerable families. The PSA has built strong relationships with families. Consequently, parents are confident to share any concerns they have. You work effectively with external agencies. You and the other DSLs follow up referrals tenaciously, ensuring that pupils are safe.

You have made strong provision to ensure that pupils feel safe at school. For example, every pupil has identified five adults they can talk to if they are worried and you provide an independent counselling service for any pupils who need an adult to talk to about their worries. However, a few pupils that I spoke to and a few of those who responded to the pupil survey said that they do not always feel safe in school. As a result, you are reviewing the systems you have put in place to ensure these are meeting the needs of all the pupils.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry was about your actions to raise attendance and reduce persistent absence to ensure that all pupils are safe. You and senior leaders have put robust systems in place to raise attendance. Consequently, current attendance is in line with that in other schools nationally. You have a small proportion of Traveller families who attend the school. When they are away from the area, this has an impact on attendance figures. However, when they are in the area, pupils attend school every day.
- My second line of enquiry was to check the effectiveness of actions to improve the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and girls in mathematics. You recently received an audit of pupil premium spending from the local authority. The auditor found that you are vigilant in checking the progress of disadvantaged pupils and rapidly intervene to support any dips in achievement. For example, during this school year, you found that disadvantaged boys were not achieving as well as they could in writing. You used your additional funding to provide effective support for these pupils, who are now making strong progress.
- Teachers say they are confident to teach mathematics due to the good training they have received. During the inspection, we observed teaching in all year groups except Year 6 who were out on a curriculum visit to the Norfolk coast. We observed effective and consistent teaching in every class. Staff have equally high expectations of boys and girls and use effective questioning approaches to check pupils' understanding and help them think problems through for themselves.
- In addition, we scrutinised pupils' written work in their mathematics books. Pupils are making strong progress from their starting points. For example, the 'cold' assessment task shows what pupils do not know and understand at the start of a new mathematics topic. The 'hot' assessment task shows that by the end of the topic, they understand the key concepts and know more about the topic they have studied.
- My third line of enquiry was about the impact of your actions to improve the curriculum and the role of middle leaders. This is your current priority and you are at an early stage of revising and reorganising how you teach subjects other than English and mathematics (foundation subjects). You have recently reviewed middle leaders' subject responsibilities and have made sure that teachers are working to their strengths and interests. For example, a history graduate will lead the planning of your history curriculum. In addition, you have appointed a leader who has oversight of all the subject leaders. Although the revised curriculum is not fully in place, you have ensured that middle leaders know precisely what

must be done to complete the review so that a new curriculum is in place by the end of the school year.

- My fourth line of enquiry was about the effectiveness of your systems to evaluate initiatives to improve pupils' outcomes, including the use of additional funding. You have strong and robust evaluation systems in place. The pupil premium audit found that additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is used effectively to raise their achievement. Your main focus over the last three years has been to improve the quality of teaching so that most pupils do not need additional support outside lessons. Effective training and staff development have ensured that this strategy has been highly successful. For example, when we observed mathematics teaching, all pupils were included in the learning activities and achieved well.
- In addition, I looked at the effectiveness of your systems to ensure that pupils are reading books that match their level of understanding as well as their ability to read the words. All the pupils who read to me were able to explain how they selected their books and how they know that the books are at the correct level of understanding for them. They were able to answer questions about the story, the characters and why the author chose certain words to describe objects. One pupil explained that he chose his book because: 'I like the words in this book; they taste nice in my mouth.' However, when I talked to pupils about their reading diaries, not all were sure how to use these or their purpose.
- My final line of enquiry was about the effectiveness of provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), including those pupils placed in the SRB. You and your special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) make strong provision for pupils with SEND. The SENCo knows each pupil exceptionally well and can provide evidence for how the provision has had a positive impact on each pupil's progress from their starting points. For example, the provision for pupils identified with autism spectrum disorder is impressive. The separate play area that some pupils access ensures that they are in a suitably quiet environment where they can engage with support staff and play happily. Most of these pupils have additional adult support and attend lessons with other pupils in their year group. Where this is not appropriate in meeting their needs, you have provided quiet spaces where pupils can concentrate and successfully take part in learning activities.
- Pupils in the SRB make strong progress from their starting points. Most are ready to return to their home school after two terms in the SRB.
- The SENCo agreed that due to improvements in the quality of teaching in lessons, a number of pupils initially identified with SEND have made rapid progress in learning and have caught up with their peers. He is in the process of reviewing the SEN register to reflect these improvements.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- reading diaries have a clear purpose and are used consistently well by all pupils.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the CEO of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Norfolk. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Julie Winyard
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I spoke with: you and the deputy headteacher; the SENCo; the parent support adviser; the trustees; the CEO of the Inclusive Schools Trust; the staff; year-group leaders; subject leaders for English and mathematics; a representative from the trust's external improvement service; and pupils and parents.

I observed learning and teaching in all classes except Year 6. Most-able and disadvantaged pupils in Years 3, 5 and 6 read to me. I scrutinised a range of documents, including your self-evaluation and school development and improvement plan. I scrutinised pupils' written work in mathematics with you and the deputy headteacher. I scrutinised a range of safeguarding documentation and a sample of pupils' files. I scrutinised 29 responses to Parent View (Ofsted's online questionnaire), 24 responses to the online staff questionnaire and 114 responses to the online questionnaire for pupils.