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Mr Ronan Walsh
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Dear Mr Walsh

Short inspection of Gobowen Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 3 April 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 April 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 your appointment in September 2018, you have acted decisively to implement an ambitious improvement agenda. You lead with conviction and have set high expectations for staff and pupils. You promptly identified the areas where action was needed. Your clear and precise improvement plans provide effective direction for staff. These plans also allow governors to evaluate the effectiveness of your actions and support your agenda.

Gobowen Primary School serves a diverse community. You and your staff make sure that the school's inclusive ethos is reflected in all aspects of school life. The vast majority of parents who responded to the Ofsted survey, Parent View, and those who expressed their opinions verbally during the inspection, praised the caring and welcoming atmosphere of the school. Comments such as: 'the school has a happy and welcoming feel' and 'such a caring and loving staff' are typical of the views expressed by parents during the inspection.

Pupils have a positive attitude to school. They enjoy the wide range of enrichment activities the school offers, both as part of the curriculum and at after-school clubs. Relationships between pupils and staff are good. Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school during breaktime and lunchtime. As a result, the school is a calm and orderly environment.

Improvement plans take into account the findings of the previous inspection. Appropriate action has been taken to improve the quality of teaching at key stages 1 and 2. Pupils and parents widely acknowledge that teachers plan engaging activities for their lessons. A rigorous assessment system has been introduced, which provides teachers with the information they need to plan their lessons effectively in order to support pupils' progress. Support for pupils who experience difficulties with learning is effective. However, there is still not a sufficiently consistent focus on the progress of the most able pupils in lessons.

Safeguarding is effective.

The overall culture of safeguarding is strong because you and your staff care deeply for the well-being of pupils. With the effective support of governors, leaders ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Leaders and governors review safeguarding policies every year. Staff receive regular training, which ensures that every member of staff has the necessary knowledge and confidence to identify and report issues. Leaders follow up absences from school quickly and thoroughly.

As the main designated safeguarding lead, you follow up all the safeguarding issues that are reported to you. You and your staff work effectively with external agencies and families to secure the prompt resolution of problems affecting vulnerable pupils.

Pupils feel safe at school. They are taught how to keep safe in a range of situations. External speakers provide information and advice about fire risks and road safety. Pupils are well informed about the risks inherent in their use of the internet and social media.

Inspection findings

- Historically, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year was consistently below the national average. This was despite the fact that when they joined the school most children had skills and levels of development that were broadly in line with what is typical for their age. Improving the quality of education in the early years provision has been one of your key priorities. Because of staffing issues, you had to take on the leadership of the early years provision. Under your leadership, the outdoor area has been refurbished and a new assessment system and new teaching approaches have been introduced. Links with the neighbouring nursery provision has been strengthened and staff are encouraged to work more closely with parents.
- These actions have led to a rapid improvement in children's progress. Current assessment information shows that all children have made good progress so far this year, and a majority are on track to achieve a good level of development. However, the strategies for improvement need to be further embedded to ensure sustained progress. From next September, this will be the responsibility of the member of staff appointed to lead the early years provision.
- Pupils' attainment in key stage 1 in phonics, reading and writing has fluctuated

widely over the last three years. This was mostly caused by inconsistencies in the teaching of literacy, compounded by the lack of a coherent phonics scheme. A new phonics scheme was introduced in September 2018 and training was provided to the whole staff to make sure that this new scheme would be taught consistently.

- As there were also weaknesses in the progress pupils make in writing in key stage 2, the curriculum is being redesigned to ensure that there is a coherent approach to developing literacy skills through the phases.
- As a first step towards the implementation of the new curriculum, the timetable now provides more time for the teaching of reading and writing in key stages 1 and 2. To improve writing in key stage 2, pupils have one book for writing for all the subjects they study. This allows teachers to focus on developing pupils' writing skills across the curriculum. A more rigorous assessment of writing allows teachers to identify and address gaps in pupils' knowledge.
- Senior leaders ensure that there is a high level of consistency in the quality of teaching across the school. Staff regularly collaborate with colleagues from other schools, within the local education network, for their professional development and for the moderation of pupils' assessments.
- Governors are dedicated and knowledgeable. They make an effective contribution to the improvement of the school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the successful strategies implemented to improve the progress of children in the Reception Year are fully embedded
- the new curriculum increases the focus of teaching on consistently providing the most able pupils with an appropriate level of challenge.

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

Yours sincerely

Patrick Amieli
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, senior leaders and middle leaders. I met with the chair, vice chair and three other members of the governing body. I also met with a representative of the local authority. I had a discussion with a group

of pupils and spoke to other pupils informally. I listened to pupils read. Together with you, I observed teaching in the early years, key stage 1 and key stage 2. I spoke to parents at the start and the end of the day and considered the 43 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.

I scrutinised various documents including the school's self-evaluation, its improvement plan and the documents that are used to check the quality of teaching. We discussed the national test results and assessments undertaken by pupils in 2018 as well as the attainment of current pupils. I also looked at the published information on the school's website, as well as minutes of governing body meetings and information about attendance, behaviour and safety.