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Mrs Leanne Yates
Headteacher
Grange Primary School
Owton Manor Lane
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Dear Mrs Yates

Short inspection of Grange Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 2 July 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. You lead this welcoming and caring school with a clear vision and a strong moral purpose. You have established an aspirational, but inclusive, culture which is clearly shared by staff, governors, pupils, parents and carers. Pupils talk enthusiastically about the school's motto, 'grow, persevere, succeed'. One pupil said teachers encourage pupils to be 'resilient, respectful and to have self-belief'. Another commented, 'we all want to be the best we can be'.

You have developed your senior leaders effectively. Three of your senior leaders are specialist leaders of education and another is a specialist teacher of mathematics. This has enabled you and your senior leaders to share your leadership expertise to support other schools within the local authority. You have ensured that all leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas that require further improvement. You have enabled this talented team to drive new initiatives and lead improvements. Leaders say that they feel trusted to take risks and be innovative in ways which would be right for the pupils.

You have high expectations that all pupils will achieve to the very best of their ability. You ensure that staff are developed professionally so that the quality of teaching and learning across the school is consistently high. Staff say that leaders do all they can to ensure that the staff are motivated, respected and effective in their roles. All staff say that they are proud to work at Grange Primary School.

You have built a strong partnership with parents. The vast majority of parents share extremely positive views about the school. They describe the school as 'wonderful'

and 'fantastic', saying staff are 'caring and dedicated' and that their children make 'excellent progress'.

Pupils are polite, friendly, articulate and confident. They are incredibly proud of their school. They enjoy the opportunities to take on responsibilities, talking with pride about being elected onto the school council, or being a digital leader or a junior road safety officer. They are enthusiastic about their learning and say they like it when teachers challenge them to think hard about their learning. Pupils are aspirational for their future careers, for example wanting to be a doctor, actor, engineer or vet. Pupils appreciate the extra-curricular activities, including yoga, multi-skills, choir and sports.

You and your leaders have maintained and built upon the strengths identified at the last inspection and focused on the areas for improvement. Together, you have worked hard to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Leaders make regular checks on learning, including the quality of work in pupils' books, providing support and enabling teachers to share effective practice with one another. As a result, the quality of teaching is consistently strong across the school. Pupils' attainment by the end of key stage 2 has improved over the last three years. The proportions of pupils reaching the expected and higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics were above the national averages in 2018. Pupils' workbooks show that teachers consistently provide challenging activities that enable pupils to achieve their best. Pupils' grammar, spelling and handwriting skills are developed effectively in reading, writing and mathematics.

Two governors share the position of chair of the governing body. This arrangement is working well. All governors have areas of responsibility which link directly to priorities on the school development plan. This helps governors to have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for development. Governors have carried out a skills audit and used the findings to appoint new governors with the required skills and experience. Governors realise that the expertise they bring to their roles enables them to provide appropriate challenge to leaders.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You recognise the importance of shared responsibility and have a designated safeguarding lead, with six deputy designated leaders. You are tenacious in your approach to safeguarding and you ensure that clear and accountable safeguarding practices are followed by everyone. Staff and governors keep up to date with regular training, resulting in everyone knowing the procedure if they have a concern.

You have established a positive culture of keeping pupils safe. Staff, governors, pupils and parents all say that they think the school is a safe environment. The family support officers have forged strong and positive relationships with pupils and families. Parents appreciate this partnership, because it is ensuring that they get the help and support they need.

Pupils say that they feel safe in the school and are taught how to keep themselves safe, including when they are online. They say that, generally, pupils' behaviour is positive. They could not think of any time when bullying had occurred, but felt confident that staff would deal with it, should it happen. Pupils say that staff deal with any occasional 'silly behaviour or hurtful words' quickly and effectively. Pupils say that teacher guidance, assemblies and lessons support pupils to keep others safe, as well as themselves.

Inspection findings

- A large proportion of children enter the early years with skills significantly below those typical for their age. Your early years leader has ensured that children receive high-quality experiences to develop their knowledge, understanding and skills, including in reading, writing and mathematics. Teachers use their findings of what children know and can do to plan the next steps in their learning. The outdoor learning environment for children in Nursery is rich, vibrant and expertly designed. It entices children to explore, be curious, follow their interests, solve problems and develop their independence. However, the outdoor learning environment in Reception is not as strong, because there are fewer opportunities for children to explore their outdoor environment. The proportion of children reaching the good level of development at the end of Reception has been below average over time. However, the learning portfolios have detailed evidence of the strong progress children make across the early years from their low starting points.
- Teachers have secure subject knowledge and they are consistent in their approach to teaching mathematics and English. As a result, pupils are developing and deepening their skills in mathematical fluency, calculation, reasoning and problem-solving. In English, pupils use grammatical terminology correctly, because it is taught and modelled effectively by teachers across the school. Pupils apply their phonic knowledge and skills to their reading and writing. Writing books show that accuracy in spelling is a strength across the school.
- All groups of pupils currently in the school are making good progress from their starting points. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils. This is because you are making sure that leaders follow the progress of all pupil groups closely and provide additional teaching and support when needed. Work in pupils' books shows that pupils' progress across key stage 2 is strong in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils are making good progress across key stage 1 from their low starting points. However, there are still not enough pupils working at, or above, the expected standard for their age.
- In each of the last three years, the proportions of pupils who are absent or persistently absent from school have been higher than the national averages. You have structured systems in place to try to improve attendance and to work with families whose children are frequently absent. However, the proportions of current pupils who are absent or persistently absent remain too high. You and your governors take a firm stance against parents taking their children on holiday

in term time. Despite these actions, holidays taken in term time contribute notably to below-average attendance

- Over the past three years, the proportions of pupils reaching the expected standard in science by the end of key stages 1 and 2 have been below the national averages. I wanted to see how effectively current pupils were learning in science. Work in science books shows that pupils in key stage 1 are taught to explore the world around them, generate their own scientific questions and work scientifically. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 are skilled and knowledgeable in predicting, enquiring and reaching conclusions. In Years 5 and 6, pupils build on these skills and are becoming confident at justifying their scientific ideas. Work in pupils' books indicates that pupils are currently making strong progress in science across the school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they improve pupils' attendance, reduce persistent absence and reduce the number of holidays taken during term time
- the proportions of pupils reaching the expected and higher standards at the end of key stage 1 are at least in line with national averages
- the outdoor area in Reception offers the same high quality of learning and development opportunities as that in Nursery.

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

Yours sincerely

Alison Aitchison
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you, your senior leaders, governors, and your school improvement adviser. Together with your senior leaders, I carried out observations of lessons. We looked at pupils' workbooks and talked with pupils in lessons. I met with a group of pupils from Years 2 to 5 and listened to pupils from Years 2 and 3 read. We considered the school's own assessment information on the progress being made by current pupils. I looked at the school's evaluation of its own performance and current plans for improvement. I looked at various documents related to safeguarding, including the single central record on the recruitment of staff. I also assessed current rates of pupil attendance. I gathered views from

parents at the beginning of the school day and took account of 85 responses to the online questionnaire Parent View including six free-text responses. I considered 37 responses to the staff survey and 13 responses to the online pupil survey.