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Christine Pyke
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Pyke

Short inspection of Grendon Junior and Infant School (NC)

Following my visit to the school on 11 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.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Your vision and passion for improving the learning experiences of every individual are very evident. Consequently, Grendon School is a vibrant, happy place in which to learn, where the education provided is underpinned by its ethos of 'we can'.

You have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for development. This is based on a robust system of monitoring and the precise use of the information you gather to identify areas that need to be improved. Consequently, you and other leaders have focused on the correct priorities and have taken effective action to strengthen provision and improve outcomes for pupils. An example of this is the improvements you have made to the provision for writing following a dip in writing results in 2016. These improvements have had a clear impact on the development of pupils' writing skills and, as a result, standards in writing are improving.

You have addressed the areas for development from the previous inspection well. You have ensured that what pupils will learn is well matched to what pupils can do already and that pupils are sufficiently challenged. We saw clear examples of this in pupils' books and during our observations in the classrooms. This greater challenge has resulted in better progress in writing and mathematics. However, you recognise that more still needs to be done to ensure that pupils are appropriately challenged and supported consistently across all year groups and classes.

You and other leaders have established a very secure system of assessment that enables you to monitor pupils' progress. Teachers use this information very well to identify pupils at risk of falling behind and provide additional support that enables these pupils to catch up quickly.

You have significantly strengthened senior leadership. All members of the senior leadership team work together as a highly effective unit ensuring that school improvement priorities are achieved. These leaders speak highly of the opportunities and support you have given them. You have established a robust system of staff appraisal which has considerably strengthened the quality of teaching and learning since the previous inspection. You make the best use of the skills of senior leaders to support teachers and develop their practice. Furthermore, you ensure that teachers are held to account for the progress that pupils make. Staff say that they value the training and support they receive.

Governance is a strength of the school. Since the previous inspection the governing board has been restructured and all governors have undertaken relevant training. They have clear roles and responsibilities and are well informed and knowledgeable about the work of the school. Consequently, they have an accurate view of what is working well and what the areas for improvement are. They are very supportive of you and the staff and visit the school regularly. They particularly value the comprehensive information you provide to them, which enables them to carry out their roles well. They have a very good understanding of external information available to them and use it well to hold school leaders to account for the progress that pupils make.

Pupils are happy and proud of their school. During the inspection, pupils were enthusiastic to share their learning with us when we visited their classrooms and confidently explained what they were learning about. Pupils throughout the school show highly positive attitudes to learning. They are extremely polite, well mannered and their conduct around the school is excellent.

You work hard to develop good relationships with parents, providing pastoral care and support where necessary. Most parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire are very supportive and complimentary of the school. They particularly value the commitment shown by the staff and the school's caring ethos. A small number of parents feel that bullying is not always addressed by adults as quickly and effectively as it might be. However, this is not supported by the school's behaviour logs or the pupils I spoke to and who responded to the pupil survey, who said that bullying is rare and quickly dealt with.

You and the staff team have worked hard to provide pupils with a broad, balanced and rich curriculum. It meets the needs of the pupils well and ensures that they are exposed to a wide range of educational experiences. You also ensure that the curriculum provides opportunities for pupils to apply their skills in reading, writing and mathematics across a wide range of subjects. One of the main aims of your curriculum has been to develop pupils' resilience, problem-solving skills and confidence when facing a challenge. You provide opportunities for pupils to practise these skills in different subjects. This has been highly successful. Evidence of this is the confident way in which pupils of all ages talk about the importance of rising to a challenge and understand that, in the words of one pupil, 'just because you can't do something yet it doesn't mean you won't be able to learn how to do it'.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements and the school's website contains all the required information. The leadership team has ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of good quality. The checks on staff's suitability to work with children are thorough and detailed.

You have established a strong safeguarding culture and staff and governors have undertaken appropriate, up-to-date training. All staff and governors are knowledgeable about the procedures for keeping children safe and recognise that they have a collective responsibility to ensure that pupils are safe and well cared for. Parents agree that their children are safe in school and pupils say that they feel safe. As the school's designated safeguarding lead, you are tenacious in securing support for vulnerable pupils and their families and access support and advice from external agencies in a timely way.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe from a range of potential dangers, including cyber bullying and how to stay safe when using the internet. You have a clear idea of the possible risks faced by the pupils and you make sure that they are provided with the right information to enable them to keep themselves safe.

Inspection findings

- In 2018, pupils' attendance was below the national average. Furthermore, the rate of persistent absence (the percentage of pupils whose attendance was less than 90%), was almost double the national average at 15.5%. You and other leaders have taken steps to improve this this year. Actions taken include working directly with families and professionals to ensure that parents are supported to get their children to attend school regularly and punctually. You also provide rewards for pupils who have high attendance.
- These actions have been largely successfully. The current attendance rate for all pupils is 95.8% which is in line with last year's national figure. In addition, the rate of persistent absence has reduced to 10.1%. Raising attendance, however, remains an area for improvement. This is because the rate of persistent absence remains above the national figure and too many pupils still miss school due to holidays being taken during term time.
- In 2018 the progress made by Year 6 pupils over key stage 2 in reading and mathematics was significantly above the national figure. However, progress in writing was average. Disadvantaged pupils and pupils in the higher prior attainment group did not make as much progress as other pupils in writing and mathematics.
- In response to this you made improvements to the provision in writing to ensure that higher-attaining pupils were given opportunities to develop their writing skills further. You also provided additional training for teachers to enable them to plan successfully sequences of lessons that enable all pupils to develop the skills they need to become successful, independent writers. In mathematics, you ensured that the amount of challenge and support was appropriate.
- You have also revised the way the school's pupil premium funding is used to boost outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. The school's new pupil premium policy makes sure that all funding is directly used to provide additional support to disadvantaged

pupils and that the impact of this is closely monitored. You ensure that all pupils eligible to be supported by pupil premium funding have individual provision maps which clearly set out the support they are to receive and the targets to be achieved.

- Your monitoring of lessons shows that the level of challenge provided by teachers is now well matched to the needs of pupils, including higher attainers and disadvantaged pupils. Work in pupils' books shows that standards in writing have improved across key stage 2. Furthermore, the school's assessment information shows that across the school progress in writing is equally as strong as progress in reading and mathematics.
- The proportion of higher-attaining pupils making strong progress in writing and mathematics is increasing. The progress of disadvantaged pupils in these subjects is now similar to that made by non-disadvantaged pupils. However, there is still more to be done to ensure that more pupils achieve the standards in writing of which they are capable, including high prior-attainers and pupils who are eligible for support from pupil premium funding.
- Provision in reading is effective. This means that pupils' reading skills are developed well. Most children entering the school in Reception have skills and abilities that are below those typical for their age. As a result of effective phonics teaching in Reception and Year 1 children quickly develop their early reading skills. The vast majority of pupils attain the expected standard in the phonics screening test at the end of Year 1. This indicates strong progress.
- Across the school reading is given high priority. Pupils' higher-order reading skills are developed from an early age. The books pupils read are closely matched to their reading ability. Pupils are encouraged to develop a love of reading. As a result, pupils talk confidently about their choice of books and favourite authors, showing an enjoyment of reading. Progress in reading is strong, with over 90% of pupils across the school making the progress that the school expects of them, with over 60% of pupils making progress that is better than this.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to work with targeted families so that the rate of persistent absence is reduced further
- they continue to support all pupils to make strong progress in writing and mathematics, so that all pupils, including the most able and those who are disadvantaged, can achieve the progress of which they are capable.

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

Yours sincerely

Janet Satchwell
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

With you and the assistant headteacher, I visited classrooms and looked at examples of pupils' work. I examined a wide range of documents, including the school development plan, the school's self-evaluation and records of safeguarding. Throughout the inspection, I held discussions with you and the deputy headteacher. I discussed safeguarding policies and procedures with you. I met with three members of the governing body, including the chair. I considered the 27 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, including 15 comments sent via free-text. I also reviewed the 35 responses to the staff survey and the 38 responses to the pupil survey. I spoke to pupils and observed their behaviour throughout the school day. I reviewed the school's website.