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Suzie Norton
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Dear Mrs Norton

Short inspection of William MacGregor Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 18 January 2018, 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 January 2013.

This school continues to be good.

You, together with the deputy headteacher, provide compassionate, caring and effective leadership. You have a firm commitment to ensuring that all pupils are well prepared, both socially and academically, for their future lives as citizens of modern Britain. You have developed a curriculum that engages pupils' interests and provides them with visits and experiences that broaden their understanding of the world around them. For example, the annual trip to London for the oldest pupils in school provides them with the opportunity to spend the night aboard HMS Belfast and to view the capital city from an entirely unusual perspective.

Parents and carers are highly supportive of the work that you do with their children. The very large majority of those who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, say they would recommend the school. One parent commented, 'The school focuses on the whole child and develops children in all areas. There are fantastic opportunities offered in the variety of clubs, theme days, supporting charities, educational visits and involvement in the local community.' This was representative of most of the free-text comments on Parent View.

There is a strong sense of community and collective responsibility in the school. Pupils are polite, well-behaved and proud to be part of William MacGregor Primary School. Through their behaviour and positive attitudes to learning, they exemplify the school's values of 'Achieve, Inspire, Aspire, Together, and On My Own'.

You are not afraid to take difficult decisions when it is in the best interests of the pupils. For example, when teaching has not met the needs of the pupils, you have

ensured that swift and effective action is taken. This has resulted in motivated and well-trained staff who put the needs of the pupils first.

There has been a considerable turnover of staff during the past four years. As a result, a number of middle leaders are relatively new in post. These leaders have been provided with good professional development opportunities so that they have a clear awareness of their subject leadership responsibilities. You have ensured that leaders have time to undertake monitoring and evaluation activities and are developing further opportunities for these leaders to be involved in whole-school improvement planning.

Based on perceptive questioning of leaders and careful analysis of school assessment information, governors now have an accurate knowledge of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They use their expertise and skills to effectively monitor the work of the school. Governors now understand how different groups of pupils in school are achieving and progressing. This was an area for improvement that was identified at the previous inspection and has been successfully addressed. Governors recognise that, while outcomes for disadvantaged pupils in school are improving, low attendance from a small number of these pupils still has an impact on their chances of attaining as well as other pupils nationally.

You have successfully addressed the other areas for improvement from the previous inspection. Teachers now understand and use assessment information far more effectively to match teaching to the needs and abilities of pupils of different abilities. You have used the collaborative work that you do with a group of other local primary schools to provide opportunities for staff to observe good and outstanding teaching.

You and your staff have focused recently on ensuring that pupils are secure in their mathematical subject knowledge. However, you acknowledge that opportunities for pupils to undertake problem-solving using reasoning are not fully embedded in teaching and learning.

The school environment is a bright and well-maintained place that promotes and celebrates pupils' achievements. Children settle into the Reception class quickly and happily and make good progress in their learning due to good teaching and caring and nurturing relationships. Early years leaders are keen to further enhance children's learning by developing the outdoor area to create greater opportunities for investigation and independence.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture of ensuring that pupils' safety and well-being are at the heart of the school's work and, as a result, all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Leaders are clear that safeguarding is seen as the responsibility of all members of staff. Leaders ensure that staff are well trained in how to recognise any signs of potential abuse or neglect. The recently introduced electronic recording

system has further strengthened systems for reacting quickly and appropriately to any concerns that are raised. Leaders are tenacious at following up any safeguarding incidents and make appropriate use of outside agencies.

Leaders are aware of the need to ensure that pupils are protected from the risk of radicalisation or extremism and have a good understanding of the local community. Leaders have taken positive action to ensure that pupils develop as caring and respectful individuals who understand the beliefs and traditions of people from different faiths and religions, including through visits to a range of places of worship.

Pupils have a clear understanding of the potential dangers that use of the internet can pose and know not to give out personal information. Pupils say they feel completely safe in school and trust adults to support them if they have any concerns. Leaders, including governors, have worked effectively with parents to extend their understanding of how to keep their children safe when online.

Inspection findings

- Leaders have developed a well-planned assessment system using a combination of summative tests and teachers' assessments. Teachers have been provided with training and support and are now in a good position to analyse and interpret the assessment information that they gather on pupils. They are held to account by leaders for the progress and attainment of pupils at termly pupil performance review meetings. This helps them to identify any pupils who are not making sufficient progress and to then adapt their teaching to fill any gaps in learning.
- In both 2016 and 2017, the most able pupils' writing outcomes in the Year 6 assessments were below those of other pupils nationally with similar starting points. Evidence gathered during the inspection shows that current pupils are now making far stronger progress and that the standards of writing are improving rapidly. Teachers have high expectations and set tasks that are suitably challenging. There is a strong and consistent focus from teachers across the school on ensuring that pupils are accurate in their spelling and apply their grammar and punctuation knowledge in their independent writing tasks.
- Through careful analysis of assessment information, leaders identified that developing pupils' computational knowledge in areas such as multiplication and division was an area for improvement. As a result, all staff follow an agreed approach to teaching basic mathematical skills. The impact of this is that pupils are now able to rapidly recall number facts. However, teachers do not provide pupils with sufficient opportunities to undertake problem-solving using reasoning. This limits pupils' opportunities to think deeply and fully apply their mathematical knowledge.
- Leaders have used their detailed knowledge of the barriers to learning of disadvantaged pupils to develop an effective strategy to improve outcomes. Teachers and teaching assistants provide additional support and interventions that are closely matched to individual pupils' needs and abilities. As a result,

outcomes of disadvantaged pupils are improving rapidly and differences in their attainment compared to other pupils nationally are diminishing.

- The attendance of a small number of disadvantaged pupils is below the good attendance of the large majority of pupils in school and below the national average. While leaders have taken strong action to promote good attendance across the school, they recognise that further action needs to be taken to ensure that all parents fulfil their responsibilities to make sure their children attend regularly and on time.
- Teachers and other staff in the early years provision ensure that children make a highly positive start in school. Teaching is closely matched to the needs and abilities of the children. Early years leaders have made sure that the curriculum is closely matched to the particular needs of the children. Staff use questions well to encourage children to answer in extended sentences and this helps to promote communication and language skills. Learning activities promote children's curiosity and enthusiasm. For example, during the inspection children were fascinated to observe the outcomes when different liquids were put into a freezer. They used their developing phonics knowledge well to write interesting and well-constructed sentences about which liquids froze and which did not.
- Leaders are aware that, currently, the outdoor area does not promote and stimulate independent learning as effectively as the indoor classroom. They have plans to develop the area further but these are not yet fully in place.
- Pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are provided with good support and, as a result, make strong progress. Teachers have a detailed understanding of these pupils. Leaders of provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities have supported teachers in developing time-limited interventions that are matched closely to each pupil's specific needs. The outcomes of these interventions are monitored closely to measure their impact and are adapted or developed as needed.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers provide more opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical skills and knowledge in problem-solving using reasoning
- the outdoor environment in the early years provision is improved further to extend opportunities for purposeful, independent learning
- the attendance of disadvantaged pupils improves so that it is at least in line with the national average by undertaking further work with the small number of parents who do not ensure that their children attend regularly and on time

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

Yours sincerely

Adam Hewett
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, the deputy headteacher and two middle leaders. I met with three governors, including the vice-chair of the governing body. I considered the 44 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and reviewed the 28 free-text comments from parents. Together with you and the deputy headteacher, I visited six classes to observe learning. I spoke with pupils in lessons and at lunchtime and observed their behaviour at lunchtime on the playground.

I scrutinised information about pupils' progress during the last academic year. I considered other documentation, including the school's evaluation of its own performance and the school improvement plan. I scrutinised the school's safeguarding procedures, including policies and checks on staff employed in the school, and checked the school's website. I also analysed the range of views expressed by staff and pupils through Ofsted's questionnaire about the school.