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Mr Martin Nicholson
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Nicholson

Short inspection of Grafton Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 19 June 2018 with Sukwinder Samra, Ofsted Inspector, 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 November 2013.

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 be a section 5 inspection.

Since the last inspection, leaders have addressed the key issues, and pupils' outcomes at the end of each key stage have improved so that they are typically better than national averages. Most-able pupils are more challenged in their learning and make better progress. You, the leadership team and a skilled and active governing body have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. From this, you have been able to plan and implement effective actions that have underpinned the improvement in pupils' outcomes in reading, writing and, most notably, in mathematics.

During the inspection, pupils were confident, polite and articulate, talking openly with inspectors. They spoke warmly about the support and experience they receive at school. Staff value the work of senior leaders. Speaking with me, staff said that you and other senior colleagues are highly supportive. They appreciate the opportunities to improve the quality of their teaching and to develop their professional careers. All parents and carers who spoke with inspectors and who

responded to Ofsted's online survey said they would recommend the school. This is because their children are happy, safe and well looked after, and make good progress.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has created a culture of safety and vigilance that is embedded across the school. Leaders have ensured that safeguarding policies and procedures are in place and are fit for purpose. Pre-employment checks on adults working at the school meet statutory requirements. All staff have regular and appropriate training. Staff who spoke with me were knowledgeable and understood how to respond to any concerns, should they arise. Records are meticulous, and show that referrals are handled in a timely manner, leading to swift support for pupils who need it.

Parents who spoke with inspectors were overwhelmingly positive about pupils' safety in school. Parents who responded to the online survey all stated their pupils are happy, safe and well looked after. This view was echoed by pupils spoken to during the inspection, who said they felt safe and were confident about what to do if they needed support. Pupils described the school as 'bully free', and were very positive about how adults support them through a mediation programme to resolve any issues that arise. The school has developed a robust curriculum around safeguarding. This approach has empowered pupils to identify types of risk. There is an openness described by staff and pupils, where raising a concern is actively encouraged.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection, we agreed three lines of enquiry. The first focused on the effectiveness of leaders' actions to improve the progress made by the most able pupils in writing across key stage 2. This was because most-able pupils have made slower progress in writing than other pupils in recent years.
- Leaders and teachers have high expectations for pupils' writing. Learning walks with leaders showed a range of experiences, including visits, visitors, drama and access to high-quality texts, all of which provide an exciting stimulus for writing. Teachers develop pupils' understanding of writing through use of effective questioning and a variety of support materials that pupils use to enhance their written work.
- A detailed review of pupils' writing across different year groups and in different subjects shows that pupils write often, and at length. They produce writing of a consistently high quality, and apply their writing skills well across a range of subjects. Pupils are motivated and take great pride in their work. As pupils move up the school, their writing stamina increases, and their writing improves in maturity and technical accuracy. Pupils spoken to during the inspection stated they felt well supported by their teachers, helping their writing to be 'the best it can be'.

- As a result of leaders' focus in this area, the proportions of pupils attaining the higher standards in writing across the school are increasing. Leaders and teachers check their marking within the school and with local primary schools and external checks of Year 6 writing by the local authority support the school's judgements around improved outcomes in writing for the most able pupils.
- Teachers sometimes, however, do not recognise when most-able pupils are ready to move on. As a result, pupils sometimes repeat work. In some books, misconceptions that have been identified are not addressed, meaning some most-able writers make slower progress than they should. Leaders have identified this through their recent analysis of teaching and learning, and have appropriate plans in place to address this area.
- The second line of enquiry focused on the impact the curriculum has had on pupil outcomes and personal development. This was because you and the leadership team identified the curriculum as a particular strength of the school.
- Learning walks with leaders, a review of pupil work and discussions with leaders demonstrate a shared commitment to a rich and varied curriculum. Leaders have implemented a curriculum that ensures pupils benefit from a range of experiences and develop as responsible citizens. National and school assessment information suggests this has a positive impact on the pupils' academic outcomes. Curriculum leaders engage in a variety of monitoring activities. This gives them a secure and accurate baseline for further development of this rich curriculum.
- The curriculum provides opportunities for pupils to develop a range of knowledge, understanding and skills. As a result, pupils use increasingly complex vocabulary precisely, and are motivated about learning about different places and people. The school environment celebrates the breadth of the curriculum and the core fundamental British values, as well as the wide range of experiences, in and beyond the school, available to pupils.
- The curriculum develops pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. It enables pupils to learn about British values and to develop cultural awareness through writing to pen pals from a different country. Pupils contribute to national high-profile art events and learn about the lives of influential people from different fields, such as Charles Darwin and Rosa Parks, and the importance of ensuring a healthy lifestyle. Pupils talk confidently about the breadth of experience the curriculum offers, as well as the skills they are developing. Pupils value the additional responsibilities they are given and take these duties seriously.
- Leaders identify pupils as being highly motivated, focused and confident to work independently or collaboratively. This was evidenced in visits to classrooms and in discussion with pupils, where they showed a consistently mature attitude to learning.
- The curriculum in the additional resource class is highly personalised and stimulating. It is linked to the wider school curriculum and enables pupils to work alongside their peers effectively, equipping them with a range of appropriate life skills, such as cooking and gardening.

- There are, however, some inconsistencies between outcomes in different subjects and between year groups. Leaders are aware of these and have planned appropriate actions to address these variations.
- The final line of enquiry focused on the actions taken by leaders to ensure that pupils' attendance, including that of those who are persistently absent, is improving over time. This was because pupil attendance has fluctuated and the level of persistent absence has increased in recent years.
- Leaders, including governors, have rightly prioritised improving attendance and have been more robust in developing systems to challenge low attendance and support families in addressing this issue.
- Leaders have secured an improvement in attendance through a range of actions. These include first-day phone calls, meetings with parents, home visits, penalty notices, developing pupil attendance ambassadors and rewards for improved attendance. As a result, current attendance is broadly in line with the national average, and lateness has reduced significantly.
- Although levels of persistent absence have improved substantially, they are still higher than the national average. For some families, this is an area of priority.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers are consistent in their use of information about pupils' skills and knowledge to ensure that misconceptions are acted upon swiftly
- recently introduced initiatives designed to improve the attendance of persistently absent pupils are embedded.

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

Yours sincerely

Nick Turvey

Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

The inspection began with a discussion of your self-evaluation and we agreed the key lines of enquiry. Together we visited lessons and looked at pupils' work. Inspectors spoke with pupils about their learning and how the school helps to keep them safe. Meetings were held with those responsible for leading the curriculum, safeguarding and attendance. Inspectors met a group of governors and a representative of the local authority. We reviewed a range of the school's documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, development plan and single

central record of employment checks. Inspectors also considered responses to the staff survey, pupil survey and Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents.