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Mary Thornton
Headteacher
Greystoke Primary School
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Dear Mrs Thornton

Short inspection of Greystoke Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 25 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in September 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

You have worked with newly appointed enthusiastic leaders to develop their skills. As a result, they are contributing effectively to improving the school. Staff are committed to your ethos of ensuring a safe, happy and stimulating learning environment for children. You and your staff benefit from working closely with other leaders and teachers within the multi-academy trust. As a result, pupils make increasingly good progress from their starting points.

You continue to ensure that a topic-based curriculum, together with a range of high-quality enrichment experiences, keeps your pupils interested and motivated. Pupils particularly value the trips, visitors and visits that complement the topic work they do. For example, Year 5 pupils visited Warwick Castle to see how to build a castle that lasts. Year 6 pupils have written from the viewpoint of a woman in Afghanistan. They put forward compelling arguments for greater equality of opportunity. Year 4 pupils talk knowledgeably about cocoa-bean growers and the implications of fair-trade practices. All pupils benefit from the on-site swimming pool and appreciate the extra-curricular clubs on offer.

Pupils get on well with each other and with staff. They are well prepared for life in modern Britain. Pupils I met welcome the fact that, in the school, there are different religions, customs and languages represented. One pupil said, 'If everyone was the same, the world would be boring.' Pupils are developing the skills of working independently and

collaboratively, depending on the task. In a music lesson, pupils worked in groups, listening carefully to each other and then improving their composition. They say that teachers help them to feel confident when learning new things. During playtimes, pupils play together happily. Sometimes, the oldest pupils can be too boisterous for the younger ones.

Most parents and carers who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, are supportive of the school. They say that their children make good progress. A minority of parents expressed concerns about communication from the school. You have introduced some new ways to communicate with parents. You are aware of the need to develop this aspect of your work further.

You have an accurate view of the strengths of the school and aspects that are not as strong. You have used evidence from different sources to inform your judgements. You actively seek opportunities to bring expertise and skills into the school. School leaders work alongside other leaders from the trust to check on the quality of teaching in lessons. You are then able to provide staff with relevant support and training. You are well supported in your work by the trust and by the executive headteacher.

You and the staff are using the school's assessment information to identify where any pupils are not making the progress you expect. You then adjust the curriculum and teaching accordingly. For example, you noted that progress in reading was below the national average. You have changed the way that you teach reading. Teachers ensure that pupils now study more high-quality texts and improve their inference and deduction skills. The school's assessment information indicates that standards are improving.

You have successfully tackled the areas identified for improvement at the last inspection of the predecessor school. Children now make good progress in the early years because teaching has improved. Staff in the Reception and Nursery classes communicate well with each other. They use resources and space, including the outdoors, effectively. Children have very good attitudes to learning and behaviour. In 2017, a higher proportion of children than average reached a good level of development at the end of the Reception Year. You are now working to ensure that an even greater proportion exceed this, particularly in reading and writing.

Teaching assistants are used effectively in the classroom. They support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities well. They are well trained and well directed by teachers, and the pupils they support make good progress.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and the staff ensure that pupils are safe. Senior leaders and those responsible for governance undertake regular checks so that they can be sure that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. All staff receive thorough and frequent training in safeguarding. They are vigilant to the many signs of possible abuse. Staff see the well-being and safety of pupils as high priorities. They understand their responsibility to report any concern immediately. You keep careful records and are diligent in following up with the relevant outside agencies so that pupils receive timely help and support. Pre-employment checks on adults at the school are rigorous and well documented.

Pupils I met say that they feel safe in school. They say they know who to speak to if they have a problem. They understand what bullying is and say there is very little in school. If it does happen, they say that staff deal with it very quickly. Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe when emergencies arise. They told me about a visit from a fire safety officer. Pupils also said that their regular online safety lessons help them know how to keep safe when using computers or other mobile technology.

Inspection findings

- Pupils leave the school well prepared for their secondary education. In 2017, the proportion of pupils reaching the higher level in writing and mathematics was above the national average. However, the proportion in reading was in line with the national average. Progress in reading had slowed, particularly for the most able.
- You and your leadership team quickly identified the reasons for this. You have changed the way you teach reading across the school. Staff have worked with teachers from other schools within the trust to develop this new approach. Current assessment information indicates that the most able pupils are benefiting from reading and discussing high-quality texts in greater depth. Pupils say that work is challenging, and it is 'not too easy and not too hard'. They are now making faster progress.
- We looked together at whether boys were making enough progress in reading and writing from their starting points. Over the past two years, boys have made slower progress in these two subjects by the end of Year 6 when compared to other boys nationally. When we looked at pupils' books, we saw that your focus on enriching pupils' reading experiences is also making a positive difference to their writing. Pupils have many opportunities to write at length about topics that interest and excite them. They use a wide range of interesting vocabulary and write with increasing sophistication. Pupils are learning to assess their own work and make some improvements. They are also beginning to act upon the advice that teachers give them to improve the style of their writing.
- Since the last inspection, boys in the early years now make much better progress in reading and writing and are well prepared for Year 1. Across the rest of the school, assessment information for writing indicates that pupils make better progress in some year groups than others. When looking at workbooks, we noted that some boys have weaker spelling and punctuation skills. They have regular opportunities to edit their writing but do not routinely spot simple errors. This limits their attainment and progress.
- In some classes, pupils' books and work on display show very high standards of presentation and handwriting. In others, teachers' expectations are not high enough and some pupils produce work that is untidy and careless. You recognise that there are inconsistencies and have already developed plans to address them.
- Another particular area of focus for the inspection was the school's use of the pupil premium funding. Although the proportion of disadvantaged pupils in each year group is relatively small, you have thought carefully about how to use the additional funding. You have invested in smaller class sizes in Years 5 and 6 so that pupils benefit from additional teaching time. You have used research into what works well to identify specific interventions to support those who have fallen behind. Disadvantaged pupils are now making strong progress from their starting points.

- Pupils enjoy coming to school and this is reflected in their attendance. Overall, it is above the national average. However, it is lower for disadvantaged pupils and you recognise the need to continue to track this carefully.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers provide all groups of pupils, but especially boys, with resources and support to improve their spelling and punctuation skills so that progress in writing is faster
- teachers have consistently high expectations of how pupils present their written work.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the Discovery Schools Academies Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Leicestershire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Joanne Sanchez-Thompson
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I visited all classes with you and the executive headteacher to observe teaching, learning and assessment. We also checked pupils' progress in their workbooks. We discussed the school's effectiveness and the actions taken to ensure the school's continued improvement.

I met with the leaders for English, the early years and key stage 1. I spoke with the chief executive officer of the trust and the representative responsible for governance. I talked with a group of pupils from Years 3 and 4 and informally with other pupils in lessons and around the school. I met with parents on the playground at the beginning of the school day.

I looked at a range of documents, including your evaluation of the school's effectiveness and the school's improvement plan. I also scrutinised the school's safeguarding systems, records and associated documents. I checked assessment information on how well pupils are achieving. I considered 64 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 37 free-text comments from parents.