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Mr S Fidler  
Headteacher  
Grassmoor Primary School  
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Dear Mr Fidler

### **Short inspection of Grassmoor Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 22 March 2016, 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 October 2010.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Standards by the end of Year 6 have continued to rise year on year and pupils' achievement is just above the national average. Consequently, pupils are well prepared for their next stage of education.

The children make a very good start in the Nursery. They make good progress from their starting points because teachers provide them with an engaging curriculum. During the inspection, children were observed enjoying writing shopping lists and enthusiastically explained what they had written.

Where teaching is very strong, teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. In Year 6, the combination of an exciting curriculum and good teaching enables pupils to achieve particularly well. Pupils have enjoyed their 'Frozen kingdoms' topic and written diary entries following Robert Falcon Scott's expedition to the South Pole. Pupils produced high-quality written work, for example, 'I saw a dark silhouette moving as fast as lightning, through the tranquil waters of the Antarctic.'

The pupils enjoy the positions of responsibility they have. At lunchtime, older pupils play well with younger children from Reception. The mini-leaders organise competitions at breaktimes. During the inspection, pupils waited patiently for their turn to try to put the ball through the basketball hoop. The gardening club members

are very proud of their agricultural achievements and recently had their success celebrated in a national newspaper.

Following your recent appointment as headteacher of the school, you have quickly identified the school's strengths and weaknesses. You have accurately pinpointed where the best teaching happens in the school and where teaching needs to improve to match the quality of the best practice. You have already started a plan of action to achieve this aim. I have asked you to continue to share good practice among all teachers.

At the previous inspection, the inspectors praised the good achievement, good behaviour and positive relationships between adults and pupils. Leaders and governors have maintained these strengths. The inspector also identified, however, the need for teachers to more accurately match pupils' work to their abilities, particularly for the most-able pupils. By the end of Year 6, the most-able pupils' attainment was broadly in line with most-able pupils nationally. However, middle and senior leaders have correctly identified the need for more pupils to attain a higher level in writing by the end of Reception and Year 2. Leaders have put in place extra intervention groups and provided training for teachers. This is contributing to more pupils achieving at a higher level in writing than previously in these year groups.

In addition, the inspector asked the school to improve communication with parents further by developing a website. You have recently launched a new website, which has all the relevant information for parents and many interesting articles about pupils' achievements. All parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, said they receive valuable information about their child's progress.

I have asked you and your team to improve the quality of teaching in English, in particular to improve the teaching of phonics for younger pupils and spelling for older pupils. I have also asked you to improve leadership and management further by setting precise success criteria for each action in the school improvement plan so that you and governors can effectively judge if actions taken by leaders have been effective or not.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The school has developed good links with several external agencies to help safeguard pupils and meet the needs of pupils and their families. The learning mentor has developed good relationships with families and works effectively with the designated lead professional for safeguarding to ensure that timely action is taken to follow up concerns raised. Record keeping is detailed. Staff training is up to date and the full governing body undertakes an audit of the school's safeguarding procedures annually. The checks on staff suitability to work with children are up to date. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose.

Pupils' knowledge of how to stay safe when online is very comprehensive. Pupils know what to do if they receive any worrying messages while using the internet. Pupils are also aware of the dangers of 'hacking' and of the failure to keep their passwords private.

## **Inspection findings**

- Senior and middle leaders have maintained the good leadership of the school since the retirement of the previous substantive headteacher last summer and your appointment in January 2016. The local authority adviser has supported this transition well. Leaders' self-evaluation is accurate and the correct priorities to improve the school further have been identified and acted on. Since your arrival, you have correctly raised the expectation for all teaching to be as good as the best teaching in the school. Your evaluation of teaching is accurate and you have put in training and support to improve weaker teaching by using the good practice demonstrated by middle leaders. It is too soon to judge if this support is leading to consistently better teaching.
- Leaders have identified the need to improve pupils' writing. Children have opportunities to develop their early writing skills in Nursery and pupils have made good progress in Years 1, 3 and 6 with their writing from September 2015. The early years leader has successfully implemented interventions for the most-able children in Reception to improve their writing skills. However, scrutiny of other children's writing in Reception does not show consistent progress. The proportion of children who attained the early learning goal in writing by the end of Reception in 2015 was below the national average.
- Leaders have also acted swiftly to address the weak performance in writing at the end of Year 2 in 2015. Due to strong teaching in Year 3, this group of pupils is now making good progress and achieving well. Work in pupils' books shows that their sentences, for example, have improved well over time. The local authority adviser has provided good support in Year 2 to improve writing and there has been a marked improvement in pupils' work this term.
- Pupils are enthusiastic about learning phonics. However, teachers are not addressing pupils' misconceptions quickly enough to help the pupils read and spell. Although the proportion of pupils passing the phonics check has risen in Year 1, the school continues to score below the national average. In Years 4 and 5, pupils are not consistently required to correct their spellings, as they are expected to do in other year groups, which slows their progress in writing. You are now sharing the expertise among the staff to ensure that pupils' progress in writing is consistent through the school. This approach is not embedded as part of the school's normal practice.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning and their behaviour around school are good. One pupil said, 'I like this school, because I like learning.' In lessons, pupils are attentive and work independently. In Year 1, pupils were excited about

measuring dragon footprints with metre sticks and took care to measure accurately. Breaktimes and lunchtimes are well structured. Pupils enjoy the games led by the mini-leaders and play cooperatively. Pupils are keen to earn a green card for good behaviour or good work. Although the school records the number of red cards given out for poor behaviour, leaders have not analysed the data to see if the school can reduce this number even further.

- Pupils make good progress through the school. Most children are working below age-related expectations when they start school. However, by the end of Year 6, standards in reading, writing and mathematics are just above the national average. All pupils made at least the expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics between key stage 1 and key stage 2. Overall, boys made more progress through key stage 2, but girls attained higher at the end of Year 6 in 2015. Pupils who have special educational needs or disability made very good progress from their starting points. Disadvantaged pupils also made above average progress through key stage 2. Current achievement shows that the majority of pupils are working at or above age-related expectations through the school.
- Leaders have identified the need to improve pupils' mathematical skills of problem solving and reasoning about number, to deepen their mathematical understanding. In Year 4, pupils are being asked good questions to develop their understanding of mathematics. The school has invested in staff training to enhance the teaching of mathematics to ensure that pupils are meeting the expectations of the National Curriculum. Leaders recognise that more work is required to develop pupils' mathematical reasoning.
- Pupils have a good understanding of British values. They are respectful of other faiths and people who may have different lifestyles from their own. Pupils are taught about democracy through the election of school council representatives each year. Close links with the local police help to reinforce pupils' understanding of the rule of law.
- Leaders and teachers effectively support pupils' physical well-being. For example, an oral health nurse visits Nursery most mornings to show the children how to brush their teeth. The sports funding is used well. All pupils participate in tai chi and are encouraged to join in with a good range of after-school clubs, which include netball, football, tag rugby and gymnastics. The school came second in a recent netball competition against local schools. The school tracks the number of pupils attending the clubs and this has shown an increase in the last year.
- Governors provide good leadership. They ask leaders challenging questions to ensure that resources are being allocated efficiently to meet the needs of pupils. Governors recognise the need to have measurable success criteria against actions in the school improvement plan so they can effectively judge if actions taken have been successful. The chair of the governing body is a regular visitor to the school and hands out the termly governor awards to

pupils from all classes who have displayed positive attitudes to their work and good behaviour. Governors also attend the annual 'Oscars' ceremony where pupils who have used digital equipment to make a film are rewarded in 'Hollywood style'.

- All parents who responded to Parent View said their child is happy and they would recommend the school to another parent. On the free text service to Ofsted, parents praised how approachable teachers are and that they respond to any of their concerns quickly.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the teaching of phonics in the early years and key stage 1, and the teaching of spelling in key stage 2, improve to raise pupils' achievement in writing
- action planning contains measurable success criteria by which all actions can be judged to see if they have been effective or not
- the best teaching practice is shared systematically to ensure that all teaching is of a good or better standard.

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

Yours sincerely

Martin Finch  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met you, the deputy headteacher, the leaders of early years, mathematics and safeguarding, and the learning mentor. I visited every classroom with you and we looked at pupils' work. I spoke with parents and observed pupils at breaktime. I met with a group of pupils from key stages 1 and 2. I met with the local authority adviser and with three governors, including the chair of the governing body. We viewed records about keeping children safe and about pupils' behaviour. I looked at documents relating to your evaluation of teaching and performance management. I spoke informally with pupils when I ate lunch with them in the school dining hall. I considered the text responses from Ofsted's text service to parents, the 13 responses to Parent View and the 13 responses to the staff survey.