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Mr Michael Shaw
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Shaw

Short inspection of Gawsworth Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 15 September 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 January 2012.

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 only been headteacher of this school for the last two weeks and have ensured that the journey of improvement continues with infectious zeal. Your staff are appreciative of the calm and sure leadership that you bring and are excited about working with you as the school moves forward.

You are ably supported by a dedicated and hardworking leadership team. Leaders' self-evaluation is accurate and all know what needs to be done for the school to become better than good. At the time of the last inspection, pupils' progress in mathematics was identified as the main area for improvement. The standards in mathematics have steadily improved since then as a result of more specialist teaching and a curriculum that ensures pupils are given a solid foundation to their learning.

A very high proportion of pupils at your school reach the standards expected of all pupils nationally; however, the progress that pupils make could be even faster given their starting points. You and your leaders acknowledge this and you have just embarked on a whole-school initiative to raise the aspirations and confidence of pupils. Leaders have identified that some pupils can be passive in their learning and do not challenge themselves to do as well as possible. This is slowing their progress.

Over the past few years, standards in writing have lagged behind those in reading and mathematics. This is especially the case for middle-ability pupils and boys. Aware of this, leaders have put in place of number of strategies and interventions. It is important that you monitor and evaluate the impact of these actions regularly and that you focus on the specific aspects of writing that need to improve. The pupils have very good grammar, punctuation and spelling skills, which provide them with a strong footing on which to excel.

The provision in the early years ensures that the children have the skills necessary for moving into key stage 1. They are motivated and enthusiastic and have a highly stimulating environment in which they can thrive. The engagement that teachers have with parents and carers in the early years is particularly strong. They are very much involved in supporting their children's development.

The pupils at your school continue to show exemplary behaviour and good manners as seen at the last inspection. They are inquisitive and spirited and enjoy coming to school, as demonstrated by the very high levels of attendance.

Governors are shrewd and have an insightful knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. The school development plan is very specific and allows for governors to regularly review the impact of improvement actions and hold leaders to account for their success. While keeping an attentive eye on what needs to be done in the short term, governors are also forward-looking. Governors provide a determined vision to see Gawsworth go from strength to strength.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a culture of vigilance in this school and the safety of pupils is everyone's top priority. You have ensured that staff are aware of the new developments in keeping children safe and you have provided thorough training and support to ensure that they understand them. You have also ensured that this understanding is shared by pupils and have introduced a number of new practices. For example, you are just about to launch a policy on sexting and a programme that raises awareness of child sexual exploitation and what a healthy and safe relationship is. It is notable that parents will be closely involved with both these initiatives.

Pupils have a very good understanding of how to keep safe online. There are signs around the school promoting safeguarding and indicating who pupils should talk to if they have any concerns. You and your leadership team have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality.

Inspection findings

- Across a wide range of subjects, current pupils make good progress. They develop secure knowledge and understanding. The progress of some pupils, especially those of middle ability and boys, should be even better given their starting points.

- The standards that pupils achieve at key stage 1 are high. These high standards are not always maintained across key stage 2. The standards in writing in recent years are not as good as they are in reading and mathematics.
- Attendance is very high and there are no pupils who are persistently absent. There are very few incidences of poor behaviour at the school. The pupils who spoke to the inspector say that behaviour is good and that if bullying were to occur it would be dealt with quickly. The pupils are invariably happy at school.
- The school has reviewed its curriculum and the promotion of fundamental British values runs through like a golden thread. The lively and colourful displays around the school also promote British values and raise awareness of our multi-cultural society.
- Pupils benefit from teaching that contributes to them developing their learning well. The needs of pupils are met and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve very well.
- The school's assessment systems are accurate and capture precisely how well pupils are doing.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school and learning new things in different subjects. They particularly enjoy the enrichment activities that take place on a Friday afternoon. When speaking to me, the pupils said that they would like to see more after-school clubs and facilities for play on the school playground.
- Teachers and parents are very supportive of the leadership of the school. Teachers feel that they are encouraged, challenged and supported. Parents are positive about the work of the school. For example, one said that they are grateful for the 'extra miles that teachers walk' to ensure that their children are safe, enjoy school and learn well.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the standards in writing improve, especially for middle-ability pupils and boys
- the aspirations of all pupils are raised so that they make the progress of which they are capable.

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

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Jones
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this short inspection I met with you, senior leaders, four members of the governing body and I was able to speak to a representative of the local authority.

With you I conducted a learning walk and visited all classes and had the opportunity to speak to pupils and see their work. I listened to some pupils read and met with a group of pupils throughout the day. I spoke with a number of parents at the school gates and took account of 27 responses to Parent View, the Ofsted online questionnaire for parents. These responses included 19 free text comments. There were 15 responses to the online staff questionnaire and 50 responses to the pupil questionnaire. I took into account one written letter to inspectors from a parent. I also scrutinised your assessment information, school improvement planning, behaviour and attendance logs, a number of case studies, the single central record and other safeguarding procedures and practices.