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Mr James Blackwell
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Blackwell

Short inspection of Jericho Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 28 February 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 February 2014.

This school continues to be good.

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

Jericho Primary School is a happy and friendly place to be. This reflects the school's motto, 'Where a smile is always returned'. Pupils explained to me that they enjoy school because there is 'always someone to brighten your day'. Pupils value the excellent pastoral care that they receive. They also appreciate the help and support they get from a dedicated and enthusiastic team of staff who 'make learning fun'.

Following your appointment as headteacher, in September 2017, you have acquired swiftly a precise and detailed view of the school. This has allowed you to identify quickly aspects of the school that need development. You have gone about addressing these features with determination and tenacity. For example, you were fast to recognise that pupils in some year groups were starting to fall behind. You made effective changes to the way in which teachers assess pupils' learning. This has allowed teachers to improve the ways in which they help and support pupils with their work. As a result, pupils across the school are now making good progress.

You have inspired the staff. You have led by example and developed their leadership skills. They approach their roles and responsibilities with a 'new sense of excitement'. Staff explained to me how they feel professionally 'refreshed'. Staff feel supported to develop and excel as professionals. Parents and carers consider staff to be helpful, caring and approachable. Parents are extremely positive and supportive of the school. One comment from a parent typifies their responses: 'My

children feel happy and encouraged to learn and grow.' Parents are complimentary about how much you have achieved as a headteacher in such a short time.

There have been a number of recent changes to the governing body. Nonetheless, the governors have maintained an accurate understanding of the school's strengths. They are acutely aware of those aspects of the school that require further attention. As a result, governors provide leaders with a high level of challenge. They ask pertinent questions of leaders, thus securing increasingly better outcomes for pupils in all year groups.

Since the last inspection, governors and leaders have addressed the areas identified by inspectors with considerable success. You have focused on improving the progress pupils make in writing. Staff have benefited from training in this area. This has improved the quality of teaching in writing considerably. Leaders regularly check on the quality of pupils' learning in writing. They ensure that teachers make writing more exciting by allowing pupils to develop their writing across the curriculum. For example, in Year 2, pupils have the opportunity to write at length across a range of subjects including history, religious education and science. This ensures that pupils make strong progress. In Year 5, pupils produce emotive and powerful pieces of poetry. They use sophisticated adjectives, similes and personification. As a result, the pupils capture some of the challenges faced by individuals seeking asylum. As well as improving pupils' writing this activity also allows pupils to develop their understanding of different communities and cultures.

Leaders have continued to secure improvements in the quality of teaching. Teachers check on pupils' understanding as a matter of routine. This allows pupils to improve their work. Teachers plan activities that are matched accurately to pupils' needs and adapt these tasks to make them more challenging for pupils. For example, the most able pupils in Year 6 benefit from the opportunity to attempt more complex tasks in mathematics. These tasks are allowing the most able pupils to develop their reasoning and problem-solving skills. However, you acknowledge that pupils would benefit from an increased focus on problem-solving.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Leaders ensure that the system to check whether staff are suitable to work with children is secure. Governors and staff receive appropriate training. This training is up to date. This means that staff understand the procedures to follow when they have concerns about a pupil. Records of leaders' work with external agencies are sufficiently detailed and well organised.

Parents and staff share the confidence that pupils are safe in school. The pupils with whom I spoke and those pupils who responded to Ofsted's pupil survey report that they feel safe. Pupils explained to me that incidents of bullying are rare and that teachers deal with bullying effectively. Staff provide pupils with timetabled lessons on e-safety. As a result, pupils demonstrate a strong understanding of how to keep themselves safe online.

Inspection findings

- I was interested to know about the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. This is because, in the past, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities has been below the national average.
- You have put in place robust systems to monitor the attendance of all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. You have also improved communications with parents about their children's attendance. Pupils receive awards for good attendance. As a result, pupils' rates of absence are decreasing. The vast majority of pupils rarely miss a day at school. Nonetheless, you acknowledge that the attendance of some pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils, remains an area for development for leaders.
- I was also interested to know about the rates of progress made by most-able pupils in mathematics. This is because, in the past, the most able pupils have made less progress than other pupils at the school. In 2017, the proportion of pupils who achieved the higher standard in mathematics at key stage 2 was below the national average.
- You are already addressing the challenge for these pupils. You have put a number of strategies in place to support the progress of the most able pupils in mathematics. These are having a positive effect. For example, in Year 6, teachers plan learning that allows the most able pupils to make faster progress. Teachers use teaching assistants more effectively. This has increased the opportunities for most-able pupils to develop their reasoning and problem-solving skills. The most able pupils are making better progress in mathematics. Nonetheless, you acknowledge that pupils would benefit from an increased focus on problem-solving.
- I was particularly interested in how leaders are using additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils. This is because, in the past, disadvantaged pupils at the school have not made consistently strong progress. Since your appointment, you have improved the quality of teachers' assessment. You have done this by providing appropriate training and allowing staff to work with professionals at other local schools. This has improved the accuracy of teachers' assessment. You were able to show me how teachers carefully monitor the progress of all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils. This allows teachers to quickly identify pupils who fall behind. Teachers then provide pupils with the help and support they need to catch up.
- You were also able to show me how additional funding is allowing staff to provide pupils with carefully tailored packages of support. For example, pupils benefit from additional sessions in mathematics and reading, as well as support from external agencies. This support is allowing disadvantaged pupils at the school to make better progress. However, further refinement is needed to evaluate the effectiveness of these different strategies on pupils' outcomes.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers provide pupils with the opportunity to develop their mathematical reasoning and problem-solving skills, particularly at key stage 2
- they continue to improve pupils' rates of attendance, particularly the rates of attendance of disadvantaged pupils
- they refine their approach to the evaluation of the use of additional funding and its effectiveness on improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils.

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

Yours sincerely

Emma Gregory
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you and other senior leaders, a group of teachers and a group of pupils. I also spoke with an adviser from the local authority and some members of the governing body. Leaders accompanied me on visits to classes where I observed teaching and learning across subjects. I looked at work produced by pupils in mathematics and writing. I examined a range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding, the school improvement plan and the headteacher's most recent report to the governing body. I considered a peer review of the school, completed with the support of the local authority. I also checked on the contents of the school's website. I considered 58 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 30 responses to Ofsted's staff survey. I also took into account 55 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey and 53 responses from parents to Ofsted's free-text facility.