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Mrs Gerri Howard
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Dear Mrs Howard

Short inspection of Marton Manor Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 13 March 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 March 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 are ambitious for the achievement of every pupil in your care. Since the previous inspection, supported well by the deputy headteacher and subject leaders, you have strengthened the quality of teaching across key stage 2. Consequently, the standards attained by pupils by the time they leave the school have risen. In 2017, the proportion of Year 6 pupils reaching the expected standard for their age in reading, writing and mathematics was above the national average. You and the governing body are clear about what is working well in the school and know precisely what needs to be developed further. Staff are encouraged to look beyond the school for examples of good practice and to draw on established research to provide the best possible curriculum for the pupils. Subject leaders feel empowered to suggest new strategies and to make decisions for themselves. There is a shared commitment among staff to work towards your clear vision for the school.

Pupils are full of praise for Marton Manor. They value the many opportunities to have a say in the life of the school and to take responsibility through leadership roles such as school captain, play leader and school councillor. Pupils were eager to tell me that they experience a varied curriculum, especially enjoying art, science, history and geography. They appreciate staff's efforts to make learning fun. Staff have high expectations of pupils' conduct. Consequently, pupils behave well and are polite to each other and to adults in school.

Leaders are passionate about the importance of reading. You have invested heavily

in training and resources so that staff are well equipped to teach reading effectively. This has paid off. Pupils are making strong progress in reading across the school and standards of attainment have risen. For example, the proportion of pupils meeting the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check has increased and was well above the national average in 2017.

Historically, the progress of the most able pupils has not been consistently strong. This has been a focus of your work. In 2017, the proportion of pupils reaching the higher standard at the end of Year 2 in reading and writing increased and was in line with the national average. More children are exceeding the expected standard for their age by the end of the Reception Year. You were disappointed in the proportion of pupils who reached the higher standard by the end of Year 6 in 2017 and have refocused your attention in this area. Current pupils' assessment information shows that the vast majority of the most able pupils are now making strong progress across the school.

Your careful tracking of the progress of each pupil shows that most make strong progress, including those with lower starting points, in a wide range of subjects. However, you are aware that the teaching of mathematics in early years and key stage 1 needs to improve so that pupils achieve consistently well. You have already begun to take action to address this, but recognise that there is more to do so that pupils achieve as well as they can.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have ensured that arrangements to safeguard pupils are effective. Checks are conducted to make sure adults are suitable to work with children. Staff receive the training they need so that they are clear about their roles and responsibilities. You engage with external agencies to secure the right support when pupils are at risk of significant harm. You recognise, however, that at times your records do not fully reflect all of the actions you take and decisions you make to help and protect pupils.

Pupils feel safe in this school. The strong curriculum for personal, social and emotional development helps pupils to have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe. Pupils could confidently explain to me the importance of an active and healthy lifestyle. They also demonstrated an excellent knowledge of how to stay safe online. Pupils are tolerant and have a mature awareness of the types of discrimination that they and others may encounter. They were proud to tell me that their school welcomes pupils from different backgrounds and that bullying is not an issue.

You and the governing body know that absence and persistence absence remain too high in the school. While you have taken steps to address this, including legal action where it has been deemed appropriate, you know that attendance is not improving quickly enough. This is especially the case for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities.

Inspection findings

- Since the previous inspection, you have increased the rigour of your checks on the quality of teaching. Feedback to staff is forthright and precisely focused on the aspects of their practice which need to improve. Middle leaders regularly review samples of pupils' work and visit lessons to assess the impact of their actions to improve teaching. The strong practice of teachers in upper key stage 2, including the deputy headteacher, has been shared with staff in lower key stage 2. As a result, the quality of teaching across key stage 2 is now more consistent and pupils are making stronger progress in all subjects. This was apparent during the inspection when pupils in Year 4 conducted a thoughtful discussion about the language and structure of the text they were planning to write. Pupils were reflective and unafraid to present opposing, well-evidenced viewpoints. Pupils' workbooks show that their writing, including the basic skills of spelling, punctuation and grammar, improves strongly over time.
- Your actions to improve the teaching of reading have been successful. A review of the curriculum for phonics has resulted in teaching which is well matched to pupils' needs. During the inspection, children in the Reception Year enthusiastically recalled 'sounds' at speed and confidently identified tricky words that can't be sounded out phonetically. This better teaching has increased standards, and now, by the end of Year 1, a much higher than average proportion of pupils meets the expected standard in phonics.
- You have built on these firm foundations to strengthen the broader curriculum for reading. Several staff have received extensive training to support the teaching of reading and have shared this new practice with others. A new reading scheme is enjoyed by pupils at home and in school. A new approach to guided reading sessions is ensuring that pupils, particularly the most able, develop the important comprehension skills that they need. Workbooks show that pupils are regularly expected to analyse different types of reading material. For example, Year 6 pupils demonstrate proficiency in exploring poetry to show the impact of metaphorical language on the reader. Over time, standards in reading have risen and in 2017 were above average for Year 6 pupils, ensuring they were well prepared for their secondary school education.
- Pupils' workbooks show that across key stages 1 and 2 they have frequent opportunities to solve mathematical problems and are encouraged to explain their mathematical reasoning. In key stage 2, the additional challenges for the most able pupils require them to grapple with complex information and apply their knowledge in different contexts. Because this work is well matched to their needs, pupils are making strong progress across key stage 2. A higher than average proportion of pupils reaches the expected standard in mathematics by the end of Year 6. However, teaching in the early years and in key stage 1 is less consistent in securing strong progress in mathematics from all pupils. At times, in both the Nursery and the Reception Years, children are asked to complete tasks which are too easy for them or which fail to build on what they already know. Similarly in Years 1 and 2, pupils repeat work they have already mastered. Work set for the most able pupils does not deepen their understanding well enough.

You were disappointed in the lower than average attainment of pupils in Year 2 in mathematics in 2017. You have begun to address this by introducing more opportunities for pupils to practise their mathematical skills. However, you and the deputy headteacher acknowledge that there is more to do to make sure that teachers set high enough expectations of the progress pupils make in mathematics in early years and key stage 1.

- You have successfully developed the skills of middle leaders since the previous inspection so that they now take greater ownership of their areas of responsibility. For example, the SEN coordinator has reviewed the school's approach to support for pupils, particularly those with low prior attainment, who need to catch up in aspects of their learning. As a result, additional support for pupils is more regularly reviewed to check that it is making a difference. Leaders are now ensuring that there is a more careful match between the needs of pupils and the skills of the adults who support them. Governors keep a close eye on the impact of this work to ensure that resources are being deployed to the areas of greatest need.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers set higher expectations of the progress that pupils, including the most able, make in mathematics in early years and key stage 1 so that a greater proportion reach and exceed the expected standard for their age
- absence and persistent absence reduce so that they are at least in line with the national average, especially for disadvantaged pupils and for those who have SEN and/or disabilities
- safeguarding records fully reflect all decisions made and actions taken by the school to help and protect 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 Middlesbrough. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Claire Brown
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this one-day inspection, I met with you and other members of the leadership team. I met with a group of governors and a representative of the local authority. I visited classrooms and observed teaching and learning jointly with you. I spoke to pupils during their lessons and also met with a group of pupils from key stage 2. I

reviewed examples of pupils' work. You presented information detailing pupils' achievement, your self-evaluation of the school and the school development plan. Documents relating to your work to safeguard pupils were checked. I reviewed information about the school and its policies, including on the school's website. I considered the 15 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.