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Michelle Chaplain and Debra Parkin
Co-Headteachers
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Dear Mrs Chaplain and Ms Parkin

Short inspection of Hodthorpe Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 29 September 2015, 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 December 2011.

This school continues to be good.

You have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have made sure that the school continues to provide the interesting and stimulating educational experience which was noted at the last inspection. You identify, accurately and astutely, areas of the school that need improving. Very sensibly, you seek appropriate help from the local authority and other schools. You make effective use of the support that you receive. This shows that you know what you are doing.

You have worked systematically to tackle the areas for improvement from the last inspection report. You have taken concerted action to tackle any teaching that was not good.

You have tackled the particular aspects of teaching identified in the last inspection report as needing improvement. The teachers make more use now of information about the pupils' achievement to plan more-appropriate and stimulating work for the pupils. You have improved the quality of marking. The pupils are given more-specific guidance about their work and this is helping them to make better progress.

You have, correctly, identified that the work provided for the pupils is still not consistently challenging enough. This restricts the progress that the pupils can make, particularly for the most-able and in mathematics.

You have changed your approach to managing the pupils' attendance, which was also an area for improvement from the last inspection. Attendance has improved; the national average is not known yet, but attendance at Hodthorpe in 2015 was very slightly above the last year's national average.

The teachers expect, and so the pupils develop, good attitudes to learning. The pupils pay attention in lessons, follow instructions promptly and take care with their work. As a result, they make good progress.

The pupils enjoy the lessons and other opportunities that the school provides. The teachers choose topics and tasks that get the pupils interested in learning. Recently, this has included work on the local Derbyshire custom of well dressing and meeting with members of the community as part of a topic about Remembrance Sunday, which also explored British values.

You track the progress of every pupil carefully. Your information about the pupils' test results for 2015 shows that, generally, the pupils made at least the progress expected of them. This is a significant improvement on the previous year and a direct result of the action you have taken, having identified things that needed improving.

You make sure that the staff and the governing body are fully aware of how each pupil is doing, particularly disadvantaged pupils. The teachers use a variety of methods to support disadvantaged pupils. The progress made by those pupils in 2015 was similar to other pupils' at the school. You and the governing body have a clear strategy for using additional government funding to support those pupils, which the school has received. You are less clear, however, about exactly which ways you have used the funds have had the most benefit for the pupils concerned.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have kept up to date with government guidance about how to keep pupils safe. The staff are trained regularly and there are other frequent and routine occasions when they are told about and discuss safeguarding matters. The staff are alert to the full range of possible concerns identified in the latest government guidance. They understand what to do if they have any concerns about a pupil's welfare.

You place a high priority on safeguarding pupils. The arrangements you have made for dealing with concerns are fit for purpose. You keep detailed records for each case. You work closely with other local agencies.

Inspection findings

- The figures for how well pupils are doing vary a lot from year to year. This is mostly because the number of pupils is very small, and especially so for the different groups represented at the school. Nevertheless, you identified

astutely problems with the pupils' achievement in 2014, including in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

- You identified some problems in the quality of teaching as well. You took effective action to tackle the problems. As a result, the pupils' achievement improved significantly in 2015, including in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- You ensure that there is a clear and consistent focus throughout the school and in different subjects on developing the pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. The teachers provide good support to pupils in lessons, which helps the pupils to improve their literacy and numeracy knowledge and skills.
- The teachers question the pupils well about their use of language, prompting them to think carefully about what they have written and to come up with improvements. For example, in one lesson, the teacher introduced the pupils systematically to new and interesting words to improve the quality of their written work, such as 'rutilant' to help them describe autumnal things.
- The teachers give the pupils consistently clear and helpful advice when marking literacy work. The pupils respond to the advice by correcting any errors and making improvements to their work. This enables them to make good progress. The marking of the pupils' mathematics work is less precise than it is for literacy and is less helpful to the pupils; it is, however, better than it was at the time of the last inspection.
- The teachers support all pupils well in lessons and successfully encourage them to be ambitious and to do their best. However, the most-able pupils say, rightly, that the work they are given is not always as demanding as it could be.
- You have ensured that there is a good environment for learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The teachers use the plentiful resources effectively to support purposeful learning and play activities.
- The needs of pupils for whom English is an additional language are identified quickly, including in the Early Years Foundation Stage. As a result, the teachers help the pupils to settle into the school quickly and to begin learning alongside their classmates promptly. The pupils gain in confidence rapidly.
- You review the pupils' progress with the teachers regularly and frequently. The teachers demonstrate a detailed understanding of how well individual pupils are doing. They confirm that you hold them to account closely for the progress of the pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged.
- You have correctly identified that you do not look closely enough at how you use additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils. As a result, you do

not have a good understanding of whether it is being used in the best possible ways.

- You have ensured that the staff understand their responsibilities for safeguarding the pupils. The staff were able to talk about how they dealt with a concern when it was not possible to report it to the designated people at the school. They knew how to contact other agencies directly and so ensured that there was no delay in dealing with the concern.

- Parents have mixed views about the school, mostly because of the recent dip in the pupils' achievement and the difficulties that there have been with the quality of teaching. You and the governing body are aware of that. Your approaches to working with parents and tackling concerns have not yet been successful enough.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- the work set for the pupils provides a consistent level of challenge, particularly for the most-able and in mathematics, so that they make the progress of which they are capable
- the additional government funding that the school receives for disadvantaged pupils is used as effectively as possible and has the best possible impact on the pupils' achievement.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Derbyshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Clive Moss
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with senior leaders, representatives of the governing body and with the staff. I held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. I made a series of visits to lessons jointly with one of the co-headteachers, spending time in every classroom twice at different times of the day. I examined examples of the pupils' work. I held a range of discussions with a wide variety of pupils, informally when observing breaktimes and during lessons, and formally with a group of pupils. I observed the pupils' behaviour around the school, at breaktimes, during lessons and in an assembly. I met with parents at the beginning of the school day and looked at the views of 23 parents posted on Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and the written returns submitted by parents in response to the school's surveys. I examined a range of documents, including safeguarding records and policies, the latest achievement and attendance information held by the school and minutes of governing body meetings.