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Mr Duncan Thorpe  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Thorpe

### **Short inspection of Harpole Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 20 October 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 November 2010.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You and your team create a calm and orderly environment where pupils are engaged in their learning and behave well. Pupils are enthusiastic about the curriculum, particularly mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT). Pupils also enjoy 'mufti' days, where they can dress up or dress down for themed days and charity fundraising events.

Teachers plan creative activities which enthuse the pupils. In Year 4, pupils have researched what life is like on the floor of a rainforest. Outside, in the early years, pupils were steering the ship to London and then to the North Pole! In Year 3, pupils have had opportunities to plan a story and write descriptively, using dialogue. Additionally, pupils respond well to challenges. In Year 6, pupils were enthusiastically using their knowledge of angles to solve problems. The most able were highly engaged and eager to complete the challenging tasks set. Pupils also enjoy computer programming and using laptops and tablets to develop their ICT skills.

Pupils enjoy the responsibilities given to them and this promotes good behaviour around the school. They explained the roles of playground buddies, sport leaders and house captains. In addition, pupils take pleasure from the role of school councillor, and, as junior road safety officers, they encourage parents to park considerately outside school. Pupils also talked enthusiastically about the reward

system and are eager to be awarded certificates after gaining twenty stamps for good work. This motivates them to work hard.

You and your middle leaders are effective in your roles to maintain and improve standards. During the last eleven months you have led the school well through a period of significant staff changes and gained the respect of pupils, staff, parents and governors. Middle leaders manage their areas of responsibility well. They regularly monitor pupils' work and feedback findings to the whole staff. As a result, the school has improved in most areas following the last inspection.

At the previous inspection, inspectors identified that boys needed to improve their writing. In addition, the inspection report noted that teachers should use more effective questioning for boys. In addition, inspectors asked that facilities in the outdoor area of the Reception class be improved and that the activities planned for children outdoors should be challenging and provide opportunities that develop the children's basic skills.

You have had much success improving the attainment of boys' writing. Since the last inspection, boys have consistently attained much higher than boys nationally in writing, up to 2014. Indeed, writing attainment for both boys and girls rose year on year from 2011 up to 2014 and was significantly higher than national averages by the end of Key Stage 2 in 2013 and 2014. However, in 2015, writing attainment for both boys and girls dipped to just below national averages. You and your English leader have quite rightly identified that improving writing is, once again, the priority for school improvement.

Outdoor provision for the children in Reception has greatly improved since the last inspection. In the outdoor area, children are able to write on big pieces of card as well as on an easel outside to practise their letter formation and holding a pencil or pen. Children use the building blocks to create patterns, and make models using construction toys. They count counters in the water tray and measure capacity using jugs. As a result of the greatly increased number of these types of activities on offer, outcomes in the early years have risen and are well above national outcomes. In particular, boys' achievement is much higher than that of boys nationally.

You have quite rightly focused on improving the quality of teaching in Key Stage 1. Some pupils, particularly the most able, do not always make good progress through this key stage and reach the standards of which they are capable. You are aware that further work is required to improve the quality of teaching in this key stage.

The information about the curriculum on the school website does not meet the requirements set by the government. This needs to be addressed quickly, so that parents have access to the correct information.

## **Safeguarding is effective.**

The school has a strong focus on safeguarding led by you. Records of bullying show that cases are rare in school. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. All staff are well aware of the procedures for reporting incidents. Record-keeping is detailed and all records are securely locked away. The school works efficiently with a range of outside agencies to safeguard pupils. The headteacher has kept staff up to date with current government guidance and the culture of safeguarding within the school is good.

The Chair of Governors has come into school to explain safeguarding policies to staff. Members of the governing body carry out health and safety checks of the school, covering both the inside and outside. Governors have been trained in safer recruitment procedures. Teachers complete risks assessments for all educational visits, which are then checked and approved by the headteacher. Pupils walk around the school in a calm and orderly way.

## **Inspection findings**

- Leaders and governors have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas which need further development. The governing body and senior and middle leaders are involved in self-evaluation and action planning. The leader responsible for special educational needs and early years knows her areas of responsibility well and has judged if actions taken have had an impact and has identified the next steps for improvement. The school provides well for pupils with special educational needs. The school uses expertise from within its own staff as well as professionals from a variety of external agencies to meet the needs of pupils. As result, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress.
- The English leader is very enthusiastic and dedicated. She has led on 'Big Writing' days which have provided a range of stimuli, using film clips and books, for pupils to write to a high standard. This has involved pupils writing instructional texts for 'The Great Paper Caper' and informative writing about how animals adapt to their environment. Consequently, pupils achieved very well up to 2014.
- Senior leaders predicted the recent drop in attainment in writing. As a result of the English leader's analysis of pupil performance, interventions were put in place to support the writing of pupils with special educational needs and disabled pupils. Consequently, all pupils in this group made expected progress through Key Stage 2. However, the most-able pupils underachieved. You have analysed pupils' writing and found that, while pupils are using high-level vocabulary, they are not always using it appropriately in their writing. Some pupils are not always clear on the purpose of their writing, and don't know how to apply the features of good writing. In addition, pupils are not having enough opportunities to write at length. Consequently, they are not able to build up their

stamina to write to a consistently high standard. Finally, pupils' handwriting and presentation is not consistently good across the school.

- The pupils excel in reading. The English leader has led the changes to how phonics (the sounds that letters make) is taught through school. This has made a positive impact on outcomes in the Year 1 phonics check, where pupils at your school achieve much higher than pupils nationally. Each term, pupils read quality fiction books as part of the curriculum, and work is often set using the texts to motivate the pupils. Nearly three quarters of pupils gained the higher Level 5 in the reading assessment at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2015. This is significantly higher than the national average.
- Pupils talk enthusiastically about mathematics and achieve highly at the end of Key Stage 2. They particularly talked to me about how 'Big Maths' and 'factor bugs' helps them to learn mathematical facts. Year 6 pupils were very motivated using their angle knowledge to solve missing angle problems. The work challenged pupils of all abilities to make good progress.
- Through checking pupils' work in school, the mathematics leader identified that some girls were not achieving as well as boys in mathematics. A web-based programme has been introduced and the impact has led to more girls feeling more confident at mathematics and achieving better. Last year, over a quarter of pupils gained the exceptionally high Level 6 at the end of Key Stage 2; this was three times the national average. Pupils consistently achieve significantly above the national average in mathematics. Pupils make excellent progress in mathematics through Key Stage 2.
- You are ensuring that further improvement to teaching is at the heart of the school's work. You are rightly tackling the quality of teaching in Key Stage 1. It does not challenge pupils of all abilities. Although standards in reading, writing and mathematics are above national averages, they are not significantly above. The most-able pupils do not always make as much progress as they should.
- The leader of the early years has ensured the provision has improved and secured better outcomes for children. The classroom organisation enables children to learn by doing a wide range of activities in a safe and secure environment. The teacher and teaching assistants have very warm and positive relationships with the children. The teacher asked children to vote for their favourite vegetable and skilfully posed questions to the children about the results. Children were asked to count the votes and the teacher introduced 'most' and 'least' into the children's vocabulary. The links with parents are very good. Each week parents are informed about the children's learning and how they can support them at home. Parents and carers are encouraged to write comments in the learning journals. Good links with nurseries and home visits enable pupils to make a smooth transition into school. In addition, the school works well with outside agencies to meet the needs of all children.
- All parents who responded to Parent View (Ofsted's online survey) said that their child is happy at school. The very large majority of parents said that the school is well led and managed and pupils behaved well. The school website does not yet provide parents with required information about the curriculum.

## **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- standards in writing improve by giving pupils enough opportunities to write at length, particularly the most-able pupils, in order for them to develop into good writers
- pupils apply the features of good writing and present their work to a high standard with good handwriting
- the quality of teaching improves in Key Stage 1 to raise achievement, particularly for the most-able pupils
- the school's website has all the required information that parents need about the curriculum.

Yours sincerely

Martin Finch  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection I met you, your senior and middle leaders, a representative from the local authority and two governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body. We carried out a joint observation and I observed you giving feedback to the teacher. In addition, I spoke to the local authority designated officer on the telephone and to a group of pupils, and visited every classroom to look at pupils' work. I spoke to parents on the playground and observed pupils at breaktime. We viewed records about keeping pupils safe. We considered the 26 responses to Parent View. At the end of the day, I gave feedback to you, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from the Diocese of Peterborough.