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Mrs Anna Greetham
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Dear Mrs Greetham

Short inspection of Tannery Drift School

Following my visit to the school on 11 May 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 February 2011.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You, governors and staff convey compelling ambition for all pupils to develop a strong desire for learning and to achieve highly academically, and in their personal development. A splendid illustration of this was given in a response to Ofsted's staff questionnaire: 'Tannery Drift is a great school to work at. I look forward to work every day. The children are amazing and always keen to learn new things.'

You have high aspirations and expectations for staff to be the best teachers that they can be. Your incisive and skilful approach to training and coaching them is demonstrated in your excellent track record of retaining a team of good teachers and developing them as future leaders. Parents are extremely complimentary about the school and hold staff and your leadership in very high regard. Pupils speak effusively about their learning and school life generally. In all classes visited during this inspection, pupils' behaviour was very good. Relationships between pupils and staff are strong and this lends confidence to their learning.

We saw many examples of children in the early years classes exploring, creating, inventing, imagining and learning through purposeful play – with gusto. High-quality teaching promotes children's good development in all areas of learning. In key stages 1 and 2, pupils showed high interest in the work they were doing because teaching provides a variety of approaches and methods that sustains their interest and keeps learning fresh. Pupils make good progress from their individual starting

points in reading, writing and mathematics. This year disadvantaged pupils are making better progress because leaders have extended the range of extra help. For example, they have access to high-quality teaching in small groups or one-to-one sessions from qualified or specialist teachers. The attendance of some disadvantaged pupils has improved notably through the family support worker's input and also class teachers' encouragement. Pupils also do well in music, computing and physical education, which are subjects that they enjoy. Pupils learn through interesting topics and themes and there is a very wide range of extra clubs and activities provided before, during and after school for them to pursue their own interests.

Governance is led and managed well. The governors support and challenge you in equal measures. They bring to the table a wide range of skills that they use to good effect. These are often matched to areas of the school's work that they take responsibility for monitoring closely, such as computing, or interrogating the school's assessment information to check how well pupils are doing. You and the governors know what is working well in the school and what could be even better. Plans for future improvements are based securely on this information. Even so, although the school has made a significant improvement in raising the achievement of disadvantaged pupils, this does not feature as a high enough priority in the plans. The school is set to expand shortly and eventually it will provide two classes for each year group. You and the governors have discussed the staffing implications and are recruiting some new staff to join the school in September. However, you have not yet finalised and agreed with governors a strategic plan for the future expansion of the leadership team.

You have ensured that areas for improvement from the previous inspection have been addressed successfully. In particular:

- the quality of marking and procedures for checking pupils' progress now reflect consistently good practice
- pupils know how to make their work even better
- subject leaders make a valuable contribution to the school's self-awareness of its strengths and weaknesses
- best practice in teaching and learning is shared widely among staff in school and with other local schools.

A long-standing staff member commented that the staff team is the strongest it has ever been under your leadership. You lead by example and inspire others to aim even higher to become outstanding practitioners. This contributes considerably to the school's vibrancy and strong work ethic. Staff, parents and especially the pupils feel valued at Tannery Drift and this brings out the best in them.

Safeguarding is effective.

Good training at the right level for all staff ensures that there is a strong culture of shared responsibility to safeguard pupils. As the designated lead professional for safeguarding, you act as a single point of reference for all queries or concerns raised by staff or anyone else. However, you rightly have ensured that there is

back-up with two other trained leaders to take responsibility in your absence. Record-keeping and paperwork relating to safeguarding is of good quality and assists quick and easy retrieval. While some of this is completed by the family support worker, who also represents the school at formal meetings concerning vulnerable pupils, you oversee each case so that actions are completed on time. You are confident in making referrals to agencies external to the school such as social services or health professionals if need be.

A single central record shows all of the statutory checks made on the suitability of staff to work with children. It is checked by you and a governor and you can see at a glance that checks have been made prior to new staff taking up their posts.

The school business manager ensures that personnel files are kept in good order so that all relevant information and sensitive documentation is held securely in one place. You make sure that visiting staff, volunteers and contractors building the new extension are vetted. Governors are completing the new mandatory checks currently.

The school's policy for safeguarding meets requirements and is implemented consistently. Risk assessment seen for the Year 4 school journey and pupils' participation in adventurous activities was thorough. Forward planning has been undertaken to ensure their health, well-being and safety while learning away from the school site. The local authority undertakes a full safeguarding check annually to double-check the school's systems and procedures. A full report follows, enabling the school to act very quickly if any alterations are required to meet requirements. Complaints received from parents or concerns raised by them are responded to quickly.

Inspection findings

- Good teaching in all classes ensures that pupils, including those who have special educational needs or disability and the most able, make good progress and achieve well in the core subjects and other subjects such as music, computing and physical education.
- The school's assessment information shows that pupils in the current Year 2 are on track to achieve above-average attainment this year in reading and writing. Over time, attainment by the end of Year 4 is consistently above expectations for the age range. Mathematics has been a focus for whole-school improvement this year and standards are rising rapidly as a result.
- Disadvantaged pupils' achievement is a priority for all leaders and teachers, although this does not feature explicitly in the school's plans for improvement. Staff know who the disadvantaged pupils are so that they ensure their needs are met.
- Assessment was a weakness at the previous inspection and it is now a strength. The progress of children in Nursery and Reception is recorded carefully in learning journals. The school has successfully introduced and embedded a new system for assessing pupils' progress away from former levels of attainment towards the end of year expectations for each age

range in the new national curriculum. Judgements about pupils' attainment are double-checked for accuracy internally. Externally they are moderated by other local schools and, from time to time, the local authority.

- Subject leaders have checked the new requirements in the national curriculum to see where new planning was required to ensure that pupils learn all that they should. Additional training for staff where necessary has ensured that they are well placed to teach the new curriculum. The work provided for pupils of differing abilities met their needs because it was set at the right level of difficulty. Occasionally, the most able pupils use the same templates for their writing as others when they are proficient enough to write straight into their exercise books and make decisions about how to set out their own work.
- The headteacher leads the school effectively. Governors are well informed and capable of forming an independent view of the school's work through their regular visits and monitoring. Evaluation of how well the school is doing is entirely accurate. Plans for future improvement are not sharp enough, including the absence of a strategic plan to meet the needs of the school as it expands to two-form entry from September 2016.
- Evidence of useful marking was seen in pupils' books, with teachers explaining why a particular piece of work was good. Pupils explained that they know how well they are learning through the teachers' comments about their work and what they tell them in class. Teachers were seen to use a range of strategies in their teaching to check how well pupils were learning such as 'show me' boards (small whiteboards used with marker pens).
- Middle leaders have benefited from attendance at courses and coaching from the headteacher to develop their leadership skills. Subject leaders are effective and contribute to whole-school self-evaluation through the monitoring of their subjects. They speak confidently about the quality of teaching and learning and can provide evidence to support their findings. Action planning for each subject is not linked closely enough to the impact of actions on pupils' achievement. There is a tendency for subject leaders to focus on teaching skills without enough consideration of how changes made will affect learning.
- The school works effectively with parents, providing regular information and workshops to show them how they can help and support their children's learning at home. Of the 91 parents who responded to Parent View, all but one would recommend the school to another parent, indicating a very high level of satisfaction.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- plans for improvement focus very clearly on pupils' learning and that the achievement of disadvantaged pupils is expressed explicitly as a priority
- they finalise a strategic plan for the future expansion of the leadership team that is sustainable with specific roles, responsibilities and lines of

accountability.

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

Yours sincerely

Linda Killman
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

- Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), gathered a wide range of evidence to judge the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. This included: short observations of lessons, jointly with you in all early years classes and in Years 1, 2 and 3, scrutiny of pupils' current written work, and discussions with leaders.
- The HMI talked to a wide range of pupils informally in classrooms and eight Year 3 pupils as a group.
- Meetings were held with you, the assistant headteacher, and leaders of the core curriculum subjects (English, mathematics and science). Leaders of music, computing and physical education each provided five-minute presentations on teaching and learning in their subject.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation including information about the school's self-evaluation and plans for future improvement.
- Policies and procedures for the safeguarding of pupils were examined, including mandatory checks made during the recruitment of new staff and risk assessments undertaken for educational visits.
- The view of 91 parents who responded to Parent View were taken into account, as well as responses of 24 staff completing the online staff questionnaire.