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11 October 2016

Ms Richenda Fenwick  
Headteacher  
Thorntree Primary School  
Thorntree Road  
London  
SE7 8AE

Dear Ms Fenwick

### **Short inspection of Thorntree Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 14 September 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 December 2011.

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

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

Your school pervades a sense of security, community and care. This is in part due to there not being many changes to your staff team, including to the leadership team, since the last inspection. As a result, there is a consequent feeling of stability. Families and staff have developed good professional relationships. This means that you and your staff know every pupil well and what each one needs in order to thrive. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about their experience of the school. Your 'open door' is referred to often by staff and parents. You set an example that extends to all staff. As one parent stated, reflecting the views of others, 'teachers are approachable at all times; they go above and beyond'. Similarly, staff who completed the Ofsted survey all stated that they feel very proud to work at the school and are supported well by leaders.

Pupils respond very favourably to the welcoming and positive school environment. Children settle quickly into the Nursery and pupils around the school greet visitors with a smile. Pupils are well-mannered and respectful towards each other and the adults in the school. Pupils who completed the Ofsted survey indicated that they wholeheartedly enjoy their learning and coming to school. They say that their teachers encourage them to be friendly towards each other. Pupils who met with me were articulate in explaining why they think this is a good school. It was particularly striking how they expressed their own examples of how well the school

encourages respect for each other's differences, reflecting the inclusive nature of the school.

While nurturing stability, you ensure that all aspects of school life continue to develop. Your evaluation of the school's strengths and areas to improve further is accurate. The outcomes for pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, in reading, writing and mathematics, are as good as, if not better than, those of pupils nationally. You have responded swiftly when standards have dropped. For example, when fewer pupils made the progress they should have in mathematics in 2015, a range of effective strategies were developed. These included one-to-one coaching, and extra training for staff, to help pupils do better. Your raised expectations for the quality of teaching in mathematics have led to pupils in different year groups making better progress, as reflected in the work seen in their books.

You recognise that the most able pupils, especially the most able disadvantaged pupils, could be doing even better. Leaders' regular monitoring of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment rightly picks up when pupils need greater challenge to enable them to make progress faster. You have provided support and training to teachers in order for them to develop their questioning skills and you have raised your expectations so that teachers routinely incorporate tasks of different levels of difficulty in their planning. However, it is essential that teachers recognise quickly when pupils find work in lessons too easy so they can challenge pupils to deepen their understanding.

You recognise the career aspirations and potential of your staff. Since the last inspection, you have provided valuable training and leadership development opportunities for your phase leaders and subject coordinators. Through their experience and training, they are able to hold members of their teams to account for the quality of teaching and help to maintain the high standards you expect. Middle leaders are now well-placed to take on additional responsibilities in your restructured leadership team.

You use your membership of the local cluster of schools very productively so that you and your staff do not become isolated, but benefit from joint training and moderation. You also work closely with another local primary school to enable teachers to share good practice and ideas. This has led to improvements in the curriculum and the development of new systems to check the progress pupils make.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You ensure that all staff receive up-to-date safeguarding training and there are clear systems for making referrals when concerns arise. Safeguarding issues are a standing item on the agenda of every staff meeting. You are alert to any risks to pupils of radicalisation and extremism as well as to any individual circumstances that make it difficult for pupils to settle at school. Staff work to resolve any concerns quickly. You work successfully with a range of outside agencies to support pupils and their families so that they overcome barriers to their education, such as poor attendance.

Pupils are supervised well at breaktimes and at the start and end of the school day. Staff keep pupils safe and pupils feel safe. Pupils know there are adults in the school who they can go to if they want to talk about any worries. Pupils are confident that staff deal with any rare instances of bullying or name-calling promptly and effectively. Pupils are very clear on the behaviour policy. They say that teachers use this fairly and consistently so that there are few interruptions to lessons.

The single central record for recording recruitment checks of staff indicates that all required checks are made to ensure that staff are suitable to work with children.

### **Inspection findings**

- Outcomes for pupils are good. In 2015, pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, made progress in reading, writing and mathematics at levels close to, and often above, the national average. Teachers know individual pupils very well and are prompt to identify when pupils are falling behind and need extra help. Teachers target help very specifically so pupils receive additional support quickly.
- You meet regularly with teachers and the special educational needs coordinator to review the progress of all pupils. You recognise that some pupils have not been making the progress of which they are capable in mathematics. You identify those who are falling behind and make sure they are provided with the help they need to catch up. For example, pupils receive targeted support in mathematics, such as intervention groups and one-to-one support. Pupils say how useful they find these sessions and the work in their books shows that these strategies have helped them to make better progress.
- Pupils receive the help they need to improve their reading and they make good progress. Disadvantaged pupils achieve at least as well as other pupils nationally. Pupils enjoy frequent visits to the school library, choosing books on topics that interest them.
- Leaders, including governors, allocate the pupil premium effectively to fund a range of activities and opportunities that boost the achievement of disadvantaged pupils. These include personal support and help from the learning mentor. Consequently, most disadvantaged pupils make progress in reading, writing and mathematics at rates similar to, or above, other pupils nationally. However, not all of the most able disadvantaged pupils make the progress of which they are capable in mathematics.
- The consistency of teachers' use of the school's assessment policy has improved since the last inspection. Pupils respond well to teachers' feedback to make changes and improve their work. As a result, pupils extend their use of technical terms and develop their reasoning skills. Teachers routinely incorporate different levels of challenge in lessons. However, teachers do not respond quickly enough when tasks do not challenge pupils in mathematics. Pupils state they often find work in mathematics lessons too easy, and work in their books confirms this.
- The school has secure systems in place to record attendance and to follow up any unexplained absences or persistent lateness. The learning mentor completes

a weekly and thorough overview of attendance and behaviour, so that leaders are alerted when pupils need support to become more motivated by their learning. She identifies the specific reasons for a pupil's poor attendance or behaviour. As a result, the school has given effective support to pupils and their families. This has led to pupils' improved attendance and punctuality. As one parent expressed, 'they have bent over backwards to help and accommodate'. Successful initiatives such as breakfast club have helped to boost pupils' attendance. No pupil is persistently absent.

- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make progress at rates close to or above the national average for all pupils. The school liaises successfully with outside agencies and families. Staff receive appropriate training to ensure that these pupils receive the support they need to do well at school and catch up, if they fall behind.
- You plan for children's smooth transition into school and through different phases. Your positive and regular communications with parents enable a settled start for children into nursery. Both the nursery and reception areas are arranged similarly in terms of both appearance and routines. This helps facilitate the children's move to the Reception class.
- Governors perform their statutory duties. They ensure that your performance management and that of your staff is carried out efficiently and effectively, and that staff are rewarded for their work.
- The provisional results of the key stage 2 national tests in 2016 indicate that teachers' assessments were overgenerous. This was especially the case in mathematics. Leaders have promptly addressed any shortfalls in the accuracy of teachers' assessments. Careful analysis of pupils' performance now means that leaders, including governors, have a clearer view of aspects of the curriculum that need to be covered more comprehensively. This includes calculations and long division in mathematics. Leaders are looking appropriately at alternative schemes for teaching mathematics that will address the areas needing improvement.
- The school's website does not include all details stipulated by the Department for Education. The complaints procedure and the business interests of governors are not available on the website. At the time of the inspection, the headteacher was updating these documents for the new academic year in readiness for uploading to the website.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they identify and extend actions to enable the most able disadvantaged pupils to make better progress
- pupils receive the right level of challenge, especially in mathematics.

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

Yours sincerely

Amanda Carter-Fraser  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During this inspection, I held several meetings with you and the deputy headteacher. I met with representatives of the governing body and a representative of the local authority. I held a meeting with you accompanied by the special educational needs coordinator and the learning mentor. I toured the school, visiting all phases, accompanied by phase leaders or the deputy headteacher. I held informal conversations with staff and pupils around the school, and met formally with a group of pupils representing Year 1 to Year 6. I listened to pupils from Year 2 and Year 6 read. I evaluated a range of documentation including the school self-evaluation, the records of the monitoring of the quality of teaching, and behaviour and attendance records. I reviewed the single central record with a member of your administrative staff. I looked at samples of pupils' work and observed pupils' behaviour in and out of lessons, including breaktimes. I took into account the responses to Ofsted's surveys completed by parents, staff and pupils and the school's own questionnaire completed by parents. I also spoke with parents and carers at the start of the school day.

Inspection activities focused on: the actions taken by the school to ensure that disadvantaged pupils achieve as well as they should, especially the most able; the actions taken by the school to ensure that all pupils make the progress of which they are capable in mathematics; the effectiveness of the school's actions to improve attendance and reduce levels of persistent absence; and safeguarding.