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Mrs Deborah Threadgold
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Threadgold

Short inspection of Whitefriars Infant School

Following my visit to the school on 4 October 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 November 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 have created a school that encompasses the key values of kindness, courage, determination and friendship. These values are exemplified by you, your staff and the pupils at the school through daily learning activities. Staff actively look for opportunities where pupils are displaying such qualities and celebrate pupils' positive attitudes to learning throughout the day. Pupils understand the learning behaviours they need to have to be successful at school and these are regularly promoted in assemblies.

You have a supportive team that has many strengths. They understand their roles and how to support each other to ensure that standards are maintained and that pupils' personal development needs are met. You regularly monitor teaching across the school, which is consistently good. Professional development for the staff is precisely matched to their needs and closely linked to their performance management. Your school belongs to the Pilgrim Learning Trust which provides support for a cluster of schools. The trust works collaboratively on new initiatives and actively shares expertise among the schools. As a result, staff receive good support and have opportunities to make sure that the learning tasks for pupils are at an appropriate standard for their abilities.

You have managed staff changes effectively. You have made astute decisions to strengthen the pupils' transition into Year 1 by placing a teacher with previous experience of the early years into this year group. It is evident that pupils are

benefiting from this arrangement at this early stage of the new academic year. You have ensured that new staff members understand the expectations of the school through revisiting the teaching and learning policy.

You and your team have worked hard and have been successful in addressing the areas for improvement since the last inspection. You have enhanced the provision of reading through purchasing a broad range of reading materials to support pupils' learning, as well as introducing new initiatives to promote reading at home. The literacy leader has provided regular staff training to ensure that pupils' reading is a high priority for the school. The school has also put in place reading groups to build on pupils' reading skills. Pupils' progress in reading is tracked carefully by the literacy leader and the leader responsible for the provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. This reading strategy is having a positive impact on pupils' progress, particularly for less able pupils.

Since the last inspection, the early years leader and her staff have skilfully created a learning environment that supports the interests and learning needs of the children. There is a well-balanced provision that supports children to develop early writing skills.

I have asked you and your team to improve the teaching of grammar, punctuation and spelling to raise standards in pupils' writing in key stage 1. In addition, I have asked that you diminish the difference between the attainment of boys and girls in writing at the end of key stage 1.

Furthermore, I have asked you and your team to provide more opportunities for pupils to develop their reasoning skills and their ability to solve problems in mathematics.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that your team is well supported to meet the requirements for safeguarding pupils in the school by providing regular training. Staff are confident about the procedures for reporting concerns and understand the importance of safeguarding in the school.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of a high quality. Records show that you maintain a high regard for pupils' welfare and safety. You have diligently recorded actions of all key staff and outside agencies in managing child protection concerns. You have clearly shown that you assiduously follow up any issues and ensure that relevant outside agencies actively contribute to the welfare of children in your care.

Inspection findings

- You lead the school with confidence and have a caring approach to your team. They are clear about the expectations required of them and carry out their subject leadership responsibilities well, due to good communication

and effective team work. You understand the strengths and weaknesses of your school well and have been creative in your approach to address them.

- You have ensured that your staff receive high-quality professional development through working with other schools. This is complemented by your regular monitoring and observations of teaching and learning that support staff to improve their practice further. The support you put in place for teachers focuses on their individual needs.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is improving across the school. Pupils' workbooks show that teachers provide work that is appropriate for meeting the needs of pupils of different ability. Pupils are enthusiastic about their learning across a range of subjects.
- The curriculum is ensuring that pupils have opportunities to practise and improve their literacy and numeracy skills. On visits to lessons, we observed pupils in Year 2 using their language skills to discuss their scientific observations. They used subject-specific language within their work and were clearly enthused with the activity. Teachers use opportunities in subjects other than in English and mathematics well to reinforce pupils' numeracy and literacy skills.
- Since the last inspection, you and your staff have raised the profile of reading in the school. You have set up reading initiatives that motivate pupils to read. Pupils enjoy receiving the 'reading dog' if they have completed their daily reading challenges. This initiative has resulted in greater numbers of pupils reading at home and getting the practice that they need to become confident and competent readers.
- You have introduced additional reading activities that support pupils who require extra support. The activities, supported by an adult, target the basic skills of reading and develop confidence in pupils' to apply their skills. The impact of this work is shown in pupils' confident approach to reading and positive outcomes at the end of key stage 1.
- The literacy leader has worked hard to ensure that the good work done at school for reading is also continued at home. Pupils have access to comprehension activities online that support their understanding of reading. The leader is clear about the next steps for development of this subject and is supported well by you.
- Pupils are supported well with their reading and have the appropriate books matched to their ability. The most able pupils enjoy reading and use their skills well. Lower ability readers use their phonics skills well to read words and have been taught a range of approaches if they get stuck.
- Evidence in pupils' books suggests that more work needs to be done to support them with their grammar, punctuation and spelling. The literacy leader is keen to ensure that there is greater consistency in the quality of teaching in standard forms of English in Years 1 and 2 so that pupils make faster progress in their writing across key stage 1.
- In 2016, outcomes in writing at the end of key stage 1 showed that boys did not perform as well as girls. Teachers are aware of this and are modifying the curriculum to ensure that they develop greater opportunities for writing which interests boys. You have also introduced a new handwriting scheme

that supports pupils in forming letters through physical movement first and then practising with a pen. More time is needed to assess the impact of this new activity.

- The early years leader has created an environment that supports children's learning well. This is reflected in the improved outcomes for children at the end of the Reception Year, where more children are attaining a good level of development than in 2015. She has a committed team that supports children's learning through the use of precise questioning. The team understands how to help children in the early years and enable children to follow their interests and explore learning through a range of activities. One child, for example, was keen to show an adult his 'stadium' that could hold four hundred people. The adult keenly followed up his idea with great enthusiasm and supported his idea further through careful questioning.
- Opportunities for writing in the early years are being developed. Children have continuous access to a range of writing tools to practise their skills. For example, they had fun finding their name and then tracing the letters carefully. Children find out about the activity through 'talking pegs' that record the voice of the teacher explaining what they have to do. This has contributed to the increase in the proportion of children achieving the expected standard in writing in 2016.
- Disadvantaged children in the early years are well supported and staff understand their learning needs precisely. They use accurate assessment information to move children's learning forward and know what they have to do next for the child to achieve their learning goals. Assessment information is comprehensive and used decisively to plan engaging activities. Effective adult support helps disadvantaged children to make good progress in the early years. The pupil premium funding is used well to help provide additional support to small groups of children.
- The most able children in the early years have the opportunity to practise their number skills. One boy ably wrote numbers from one to 29 on his clip board and was keen to show an adult his success. Adults provide activities that extend children's learning.
- The pupil premium funding is used effectively in key stage 1 to support disadvantaged pupils. Adults provide additional activities to build on pupils' reading, writing and mathematics skills. These activities and the extent to which they are making a positive contribution to pupils' progress are monitored carefully by the class teacher and the leader responsible for children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Consequently, these pupils make good progress and are well supported in the school.
- Outcomes in mathematics are not as good as they could be at the end of key stage 1. Pupils' skills in solving mathematical problems and being able to reason in mathematics remain underdeveloped.
- Phonics skills are taught well in the early years and key stage 1. Children in the early years have access to a range of activities to reinforce their learning of letters and the sounds they make. For example, children enjoyed using the class board to move first letter sounds to the appropriate item. In Year

2, pupils were focusing on the application of the middle long vowel sounds and this was consistent across classes. Pupils are taught the skills to read words well.

- The leader of the provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities understands her role and supports pupils, staff and families well. She supports the infant school and the local junior school, therefore providing smooth transition between the two settings. She tracks pupils' progress carefully and works with outside agencies to gather information to support the learning needs of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. In class, pupils are supported well by teachers who plan for their learning and teaching assistants who understand the pupils' needs.
- The school provides well for pupils who speak English as an additional language. The progress of pupils in this group is tracked carefully and where required, additional guidance is provided to support their language development. When these pupils join the school in the early years, they make good progress from their starting points due to the effective support that they receive.
- Parents feel that the school supports their children well. Parents are appreciative of the new methods of communication by text and email that help keep them informed of the life of the school and how to support their child's learning at home. They value the warm and friendly approach that you and your staff provide.
- Pupils enjoy the range of after-school clubs. They value the ways in which staff reward pupils for positive behaviour. Pupils are confident and happy to be at school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- there is consistent and effective teaching of grammar, punctuation and spelling from Year 1 to Year 2 so that pupils make good progress in writing overall
- the difference in attainment between boys and girls in writing at the end of key stage 1 is diminished
- opportunities are provided for pupils to develop their problem-solving and reasoning skills in mathematics at the end of key stage 1.

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

Yours sincerely

Emma Nuttall
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you and with members of the governing body, including the chair and vice-chair. You and I visited a series of lessons together. I examined examples of pupils' work and looked at teachers' assessments of that work. I spoke with pupils, informally, during lunchtime and lessons, and formally during an interview. I listened to pupils read. I observed pupils' behaviour around the school at the start of the day, at breaktimes and during lessons. I met with parents at the beginning of the school day and looked at the views of parents posted on Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. I examined a range of documents, including safeguarding records and policies, behaviour policies, the latest achievement information for the school, the school's improvement plan and self-evaluation summary, records of meetings of the governing body, and information relating to pupils' attendance and behaviour.

I considered the areas for improvement that were identified at the previous inspection in November 2011. These related to: improving attainment in reading to match that in writing and mathematics by ensuring that all pupils, and boys in particular, are given regular opportunities to apply their knowledge of letters and sounds to build unfamiliar words. I also considered improvements in the opportunities for reading experiences in all curriculum areas and in a variety of media, to equip pupils with wider opportunities to develop their comprehension skills. Furthermore, I considered actions taken by subject leaders to monitor and evaluate the impact on pupils' attainment in reading. In addition, I also considered the provision of more opportunities for children in the early years to develop their emergent writing through a wide variety of independent activities.

The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.