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Mrs Claire Fisher  
Executive Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Fisher

### **Short inspection of Heighington Millfield Primary Academy**

Following my visit to the school on 8 December 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 October 2011.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. The school provides a rich and balanced curriculum which motivates the pupils to learn. During the inspection, younger pupils were enthusiastically learning words and songs in Spanish connected to Christmas. Pupils also have the opportunity to learn French and Mandarin. There is a wide range of trips and residential visits to enhance pupils' knowledge of many curriculum areas, and to inspire pupils to write following their visits. In addition, pupils enjoy writing blogs as part of the young journalists' group. Scrutiny of pupils' writing shows that most pupils are making good progress.

The progress pupils make in reading and mathematics is improving. In 2015, the progress pupils made in these two subjects by the end of key stage 2 was significantly below the national average. However, in 2016, their progress was broadly average. The pupils' outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics at the expected standard in 2016 were above the national average at the end of both key stages 1 and 2.

You are passionate about the professional development of your staff and ensure that they have good opportunities to observe good practice and work with colleagues to improve the quality of teaching. In addition, you have also developed the leadership team of the school, both senior and middle leaders, and they are effective in leading improvements. They know the strengths and weaknesses of the school well.

At the previous inspection, the inspector asked you to ensure that the work is better matched to the pupils' abilities. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities made broadly expected progress in reading and writing through key stage 2 in 2016. This group of pupils made above-average progress in mathematics.

However, the progress of the most able pupils through key stage 2 in 2016 was not as good as that of other pupils nationally, who had the same high outcomes at the end of key stage 1. Not enough of these pupils went on to achieve highly at the end of key stage 2 in reading, writing and mathematics as other pupils nationally, particularly the boys in reading. The proportion of pupils who achieved highly in mathematics was below the national average at the end of key stage 2.

Furthermore, not enough pupils made good progress by the end of key stage 1 in 2016 from their starting points at the end of Reception Year. The proportion of pupils who had achieved the expected standard at the end of Reception Year in 2014, and who progressed to achieve highly in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 1 in 2016, was below that for other pupils nationally. The proportion of boys who achieved highly in all three subjects was below that for other boys nationally.

I have asked you and your team to develop further pupils' mathematical reasoning skills throughout the school to enable more pupils to achieve highly. In addition, I have asked you to ensure that pupils, particularly the boys, develop their inference skills (those skills that enable pupils to understand the meaning of what they read) in reading, also to enable more pupils to achieve highly.

The school's self-evaluation, which is discussed and agreed by you and the governing body only, is over-generous. I have asked that the school's self-evaluation takes into account the views of other leaders and uses a wider range of evidence within the school to ensure that it is more robust and accurate.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You and your leaders and managers work well with a range of external agencies to keep pupils safe. They have worked successfully with social care, family resource workers, specialists for behavioural support and the school nurse to put provision in place to support pupils. The school maintains good links with the families to ensure that all the support is coordinated. The pupils' attendance is above average.

The school's records show that incidents of bullying are rare. The pupils say that pupils' behaviour is good most of the time. The pupils follow the school's values and conduct themselves well around the school. The learning mentors offer valuable support to pupils, particularly supporting pupils' social and emotional development.

All the necessary checks have been completed on adults who work in the school. The school's record-keeping is detailed. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding requirements are fit for purpose.

## **Inspection findings**

- You and your staff are highly dedicated and provide the pupils with an exciting curriculum which enthuses the pupils to learn. You and the other leaders regularly check the standard of teaching and learning throughout the school. You put support in place to improve teaching, and as a result, it is consistently good.
- You have had particular success improving pupils' writing. The teachers use the topics to encourage pupils to write imaginatively. In Year 2, after learning about the fire of London, one pupil wrote, 'As soon as I saw the great fire, I was horrified and seemed rooted to the spot'. In Year 6, the teachers asked pupils to imagine what it would be like to paraglide over mountains. One pupil wrote, 'I'm waiting at the side of the rocky mountain getting ready for take-off. I am very apprehensive about my decision – should I really be doing this?'.
- The outcomes in writing at the end of 2016, for pupils in both key stages 1 and 2, were above the national average for both the proportion of pupils who achieved the expected standard, and for the proportion of pupils who achieved highly in writing.
- The head of school and the two assistant headteachers lead well. They provide training and support to improve teaching and learning. The mathematics leader has observed good practice at another school and shared his findings. He has delivered training for staff on the teaching of mathematical reasoning. The impact of this training is becoming evident in the pupils' work. In Year 2, the teachers asked pupils whether, if they always added two odd numbers together, they would always get an even number for the answer. Pupils had to give reasons to explain their point of view. In Years 5 and 6, the teachers gave pupils a statement, 'All prime numbers have to be odd.' The pupils had to prove or disprove the statement and explain their reasoning. The pupils are responding well to these opportunities.
- However, the leaders' and my work scrutiny of pupils' mathematics books this term concluded that examples of pupils' mathematical reasoning are more prominent in Years 5 and 6 than elsewhere in the school. Consequently, the most able pupils are not yet being challenged regularly enough to achieve highly in mathematics throughout the school.

- The pupils read with expression and fluency. The pupils have achieved well in the phonics check in Year 1 up to this year. Outcomes had been above the national average. However, outcomes fell in 2016 to just below the national average. Leaders took swift action and put in extra phonic lessons for those pupils who did not pass the check. The school's tracking information shows that the proportion of pupils on track to pass the check next year is high.
- In 2016, the progress of the most able pupils in reading, particularly the boys, was less than that of other pupils nationally. The leader of English analysed the assessments and found that pupils did not answer the reading inference questions as well as they could.
- The teachers are challenging the most able pupils to give more detailed answers to inference questions in Years 5 and 6. However, the prior middle-attaining pupils in these year groups are not being challenged regularly enough to give detailed answers. The pupils in all year groups have opportunities to discuss texts, but do not have enough opportunities to develop their written comprehension skills in order to answer inference questions as well as they could. The leaders' recent analysis of pupils' reading comprehension work came to the same conclusion that I found. The school's current tracking information shows that fewer boys than girls are on track to achieve highly in reading by the end of Years 2 and 6.
- Your evaluation of the effectiveness of the school is above that of the judgement of this inspection. Not all of the school leaders are involved in discussing and contributing to the school's evaluation of its overall effectiveness. The leaders' monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning have not been used well enough to inform this overall judgement.
- The school leaders are involved in the review and formation of the school improvement plan. This has identified the need for more pupils to achieve highly in all year groups. The plan contains specific success criteria by which leaders and governors can judge whether the actions taken have been successful.
- The governing body is committed to the school. It ensures that the performance management process for teachers is robust and that only good performance is rewarded. Governors keep a close check on how the pupil premium funding is allocated and also check the progress that disadvantaged pupils are making.
- The children have a great start in Reception Year. The leadership of the early years has been strong for many years and the new leader is enthusiastic and capable. The leader has good links with the local nurseries and speaks to the children's key workers to gain information about the children before they start school. The children have settled well into the school routines and there is a positive and productive atmosphere for learning.

- Adults' observations of children's learning are regular and are used well to inform the planning of the children's next steps. During the inspection, the children were encouraged to write their own sentences following their visit to the pantomime. One boy wrote, 'I saw the scary beast.' Outside, the children were very creative, making reindeer, rockets and aliens out of modelling clay, and decorating their work. The children make good progress from their starting points. The proportion of pupils who achieve a good level of development at the end of Reception Year is consistently much higher than the national average.
- The parents are highly supportive of the school. Many parents attend the regular curriculum information mornings where they can go around the school to see pupils working on particular aspects of the curriculum. All parents who completed the online questionnaire said that their child was safe at school and was making good progress. The overwhelming majority of parents would recommend the school to other parents.
- The school's curriculum provides the opportunity for pupils to develop their enterprise skills. The children in the early years sell biscuits and lemonade following a performance to parents. Older pupils organise a healthy tuck shop and calculate their profit using a spreadsheet. Pupils enjoy spending the profit.
- The teachers promote pupils' historical skills well. In Years 3 and 4, pupils have studied the Victorians and have compared life for a seven-year-old in the 1840s with the present day. One pupil wrote about the Victorian era, 'The boys wear patchwork clothes and black flat caps that probably don't fit them.'
- The school provides well for the pupils whose parents are in the armed services. The staff provide a nurture group to support pupils and allow pupils to video-call their parents during school time because of the time differences involved. Pupils whose parents are in the armed forces attended the opening ceremony of the Bomber Command Memorial and this group of pupils represents the school at the local church on Armistice Day. The school's tracking information shows that this group of pupils is making good progress at the school.
- The school uses the pupil premium funding well to provide small-group tuition and one-to-one support for disadvantaged pupils. The outcomes for disadvantaged pupils at the end of key stage 1, in 2016, were above the national average for other pupils at the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics. The progress of this group of pupils was broadly average through key stage 2 in 2016.
- The pupils are prepared well for life in modern Britain. They learn about different religions other than their own. Recently, pupils created rangoli patterns as part of learning more about Hinduism. The pupils are respectful towards other people who may have different lifestyles from their own. They understand the rule of law and uphold the school's values.
- The school promotes sport for all pupils. There is a range of extra-curricular clubs, including for kick boxing. The pupils in Years 3 and 4 recently came second in a local athletics competition.

- Pupils' musical talents are promoted well. All pupils have the opportunity to learn to play the ukulele and drums. In addition, the popular choir sings in the Young Voices concert at Sheffield Arena.
- This school is not an outstanding school because not enough pupils have made good progress through key stage 1 from their starting points. In addition, pupils have not made above-average progress through key stage 2 in any subject. The proportion of pupils who achieve highly in mathematics is below the national average at the end of key stage 2. Finally, the pupils' ability to reason mathematically and to use their inference skills to answer reading comprehension questions is not as well developed as it could be.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the school's self-evaluation process is more informed by using a wide range of evidence, and takes into account the views of all of the school's leaders
- the pupils' mathematical reasoning skills are further developed to ensure that pupils make better progress and achieve highly
- the pupils' ability to answer inference questions about their reading improves so that more pupils, particularly the boys, can make better progress and achieve highly.

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

Yours sincerely

Martin Finch  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met you, the head of school, the acting head of school, who is a substantive assistant headteacher, the mathematics leader, who is the other assistant headteacher, the leader for English, the leader for the early years, and five governors, including the chair of the governing body. I held a telephone conversation with an external adviser to the school. I visited most classrooms and looked at pupils' work. I spoke to pupils from key stages 1 and 2. I also listened to pupils read. I reviewed records about attendance and keeping children safe. I studied your self-evaluation, the school improvement plan, the school's current pupil tracking information and the minutes of governing body meetings. I looked at your information related to the monitoring of teaching. I considered the 61 responses to

Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the 53 responses to the Ofsted free-text service. The school did not send out the staff survey or the pupil survey. The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

The key lines of enquiry for this inspection focused on:

- the effectiveness of school leaders, including governors, to enable more pupils to achieve highly
- why the most able boys did not make as much progress as other most-able boys nationally by the end of key stage 2 in reading in 2016
- why more pupils, particularly boys, did not achieve highly in key stage 1 in 2016
- the effectiveness of the school's safeguarding arrangements.