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Mrs Deborah Park
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Park

Short inspection of Thorpe Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 27 June 2017, 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.

Since you joined the school in April 2016, you have established a strong school ethos which promotes pupils' personal, social and academic development well. Pupils understand and value the 'awesome foursome', the cartoon characters that build their confidence, develop resilience, encourage enquiry and strive for success. These are promoting pupils' aspirations and shaping their development.

You have challenged weaker teaching and taken effective action to bring about improvement. In the last year, changes in staffing, and temporary staff absence due to maternity leave, affected the continuity and quality of teaching and the capacity of senior and middle leaders. Staffing has stabilised and staff are now working with a high degree of teamwork to strengthen teaching and learning and to ensure that pupils make good progress. Staff strongly endorse your leadership.

Governors are well informed and passionate about the school. Several have children currently at the school. They welcome the transformation you have made in the culture of the school and the high expectations you have set. They rightly say that you have dealt well with difficulties brought about by staffing turbulence. They value the better links with other schools in the locality which enable you to regularly check the accuracy of teachers' assessment. Governors have a good first-hand

knowledge of your new assessment system and of the procedures you have introduced to check the impact of teaching on pupils' learning.

At the last inspection, the school was asked to ensure that subject leaders monitor teaching and learning closely. Current subject leaders are new to their roles and have had limited time to demonstrate the impact of their work. They are proactive and effective in providing practical support and guidance for newly qualified teachers, who are developing well.

Middle leaders and teachers know pupils well and assess their needs accurately, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. They use this information well to identify actions to support and monitor pupils' progress.

You are using your new assessment system effectively to measure progress and to identify pupils who are falling behind. The action you have taken has begun to accelerate pupils' progress. You have ensured that teachers give pupils constructive feedback. In line with the school's policy, pupils regularly check, correct and improve their work effectively.

The last inspection recommended that teaching assistants are deployed more effectively. You have ensured that teaching assistants are flexible in supporting individuals and other pupils in class. Teaching assistants ask questions that enable pupils they are supporting to work independently. On occasion, they lack skill in leading a small group. Sometimes a teacher misses an opportunity to include the group supported by the teaching assistant in the whole-class question and answer session. You are introducing performance management for teaching assistants to strengthen the quality and consistency of additional support.

Parents' responses to the Ofsted online survey, including their written responses, were highly positive. Most said that their children were thriving in school. The great majority would recommend the school to other parents. A few have been concerned about the changes in staffing.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and up to date. You and the local authority have taken effective action to ensure that the premises are fully secure. Leaders have already taken prompt action, following a recent local authority safeguarding audit, to provide some additional staff training. You have an effective system for staff to alert leaders to any concerns about pupils' welfare. Staff responsible for safeguarding act promptly to consult with parents and to involve other agencies when appropriate. The school communicates well with other agencies who provide appropriate support for children and their families.

Pupils said that they feel safe. They believe that improvements in the school culture are helping pupils to make better choices about their behaviour. They learn about safety online and know what to do if they receive unwanted messages. Pupils said that bullying is rare and any incidents of cyber bullying or name-calling are dealt

with well.

Inspection findings

- At the end of the early years, the proportion of children gaining a good level of development has risen in line with the national average. In 2017, three quarters of Reception children reached a good level of development, which is an increase over the previous year. A stronger focus on reading, writing and mathematics has led to improved outcomes in these areas and children are consequently better prepared for Year 1. The outdoor area has received funding for necessary redevelopment.
- Phonics (letters and the sounds they represent) outcomes have been consistently above average in Year 1. In 2017, a higher proportion of Year 1 pupils achieved the required standard compared with the 2016 national average.
- In 2016, pupils in key stage 1 made average progress in mathematics and writing, and attainment was also average. Progress was not as strong in reading, and attainment was below average. The current Year 2 have not made as much progress in reading and writing as in mathematics. Year 2 has been affected by disruption in staffing. On occasion, pupils answer reading comprehension questions too briefly in single words or short phrases when they have been asked to give explanations in full sentences. More stable teaching in the latter part of the year has led to improved progress, but more needs to be done next year to ensure that these pupils catch up.
- The school has a past record of strong progress from key stage 1 to the end of key stage 2. In 2016, progress and attainment dipped and were below average in reading and writing. Pupils were not fully prepared for the demands of the new curriculum. Teachers analysed gaps in learning well and put in extensive support to ensure that the current Year 6 pupils have made better progress. In 2017, teacher assessments of Year 6 pupils' work, which have been checked with other schools, show a marked improvement in attainment and progress, especially in reading and writing.
- In 2016, disadvantaged Year 6 pupils made similar progress to others nationally in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Across all year groups, approximately three quarters of pupils are at age-related expectations and most pupils have made at least the progress expected from their starting points. However, a few of the most able pupils in Year 4 have not made enough progress.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers enable pupils to make as consistently strong progress in reading and writing as in mathematics, particularly at key stage 1
- teaching assistants make a consistently high quality contribution to pupils'

learning.

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

Yours sincerely

Bernard Campbell
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, middle leaders, newly qualified teachers, a group of pupils and three members of the governing body. I also met with the deputy headteacher, who attended the inspection voluntarily despite being on maternity leave, and the professional consultant who has taken on some of her role. I also spoke by telephone to a representative of the local authority and two parents. I observed teaching in all classes jointly with you. I discussed samples of work in pupils' books with staff and spoke with pupils in class.

I checked the school website and examined a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation, the school improvement plan, assessment information and safeguarding records. I took account of the 57 responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, including 23 written responses, and the 23 responses from staff to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.