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Mrs Joanna Speak
Headteacher
Poplars Farm Primary School
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Dear Mrs Speak

Short inspection of Poplars Farm Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 17 January 2018, 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 March 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since your appointment in September 2017, you have wasted no time in securing a thorough and accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. You welcome challenge, for example by securing the support of an independent consultant and working closely with the local network of schools. You have forged stronger links with parents and carers. The school community is on board with what you have set out to achieve.

You have identified appropriate objectives to raise standards, prioritising a rich, balanced curriculum and improvements to teaching. Your plans are aspirational and ambitious. Although you have set clear pupil attainment targets, plans would benefit from sharper learning and progress measures. This will help you to be clearer about the impact of your actions when reporting to governors at regular intervals.

You have a crystal-clear vision, underpinned by a strong conviction that pupils in the school community deserve the very best and, given the opportunity, can excel. You have an especially strong commitment to pupils' personal and social development, helping them to become model citizens in modern Britain. Everyone in the school community puts the 'GROW' values (giving, responsible, open-minded, welcoming) into practice. Adults effectively model the behaviours they want to see and hear. Consequently, pupils are well mannered, polite, friendly and welcoming. They show pride in their work, as demonstrated by the excellent handwriting and presentation in workbooks and in displays. Most pupils, including the most able in Year 1, write

using an immaculate cursive script. They highly prize their pen licences.

Following the last inspection, inspectors asked leaders to provide more ideas to stimulate pupils' learning, especially in writing. The current inspiring curriculum motivates pupils. Pupils do indeed have plenty of opportunities to write for a range of purposes and audiences in just about all subjects. This makes a positive contribution to pupils' well-developed writing skills.

Since your arrival, you have shone a bright light on the achievement of the most able pupils. In particular, you have identified those pupils who have not previously demonstrated above-average attainment, but who, if stretched, ought to be able to reach higher standards and greater depth in their learning. Consequently, teachers are challenging these pupils well so that their progress is quickening. You recognise that this strong work now needs to be proven in pupils' test results and teachers' assessments at the end of each key stage.

Your actions to improve attendance, which remains a little below the national average, are taking effect.

Governors, who bring a range of suitable skills and experience to their work, understand where the main strengths and weaknesses are in pupils' outcomes across the school. They, like you, aspire to create an outstanding school. Recently appointed governors have brought renewed vitality to the governing body. Governors visit the school to check that what leaders tell them is accurate. These visits are more recently emphasising the most important school improvement priorities. Most significantly, the governing body has successfully appointed you, an experienced and effective headteacher.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Adults are well trained so that they understand their responsibilities. This includes, for example, the responsibility to look out for any pupils who may be at risk of exposure to extremist views or potentially at risk of female genital mutilation. They are vigilant and take action where they consider pupils may be at risk of harm. Leaders are successful in securing early help for pupils who need it. They keep detailed records that help them to keep a track of each child about whom there are concerns.

Leaders carry out all the required recruitment checks on adults to make sure staff can be considered safe to work with children. They keep an accurate record of these checks. Governors take their safeguarding duties seriously. The experienced safeguarding governor checks the school's arrangements regularly.

Adults conscientiously teach pupils how to stay safe. For example, they make sure pupils understand the risks associated with social networking and other online activity. They teach pupils how to cross the road safely. Pupils understand about different types of bullying and are satisfied that adults deal with bullying well. The

fact that adults teach pupils to respect diversity, and that open-mindedness is an important school value, makes a strong contribution to their feeling safe. Pupils have a well-developed knowledge about different cultures and the major world faiths. However, you recognise that they have a less well-developed understanding about gender diversity.

Inspection findings

- Together with your team, you have further improved the quality of the curriculum, which is broad, balanced and well designed. As a result, pupils enjoy a rich variety of learning experiences. Regular curriculum 'focus days', which cover all national curriculum subjects, give pupils opportunities to engage in practical learning that deepens their thinking. Activities give pupils opportunities to apply their English and mathematics knowledge, skills and understanding in other subjects. For example, pupils have many opportunities to write for a range of audiences and purposes and this helps them to improve continuously their writing knowledge and skills.
- After a number of years of broadly average progress of pupils by the time they leave the school, the key stage 2 test results in 2016 were poor. This was a shock to the school. Results in 2017 saw an improvement, with pupils, including the disadvantaged, again making broadly average progress. Most pupils left the school having met the expected standard, ready for secondary school. This recovery was possible because leaders and teachers lifted their expectations and adjusted the curriculum to match the raised bar nationally. Leaders and governors are not satisfied with average progress. For this reason, you have set pupil targets that are more aspirational. If met, these targets should represent better than average progress. Certainly, work in pupils' workbooks and your own assessment information suggest that most pupils currently in the school are making good progress.
- Leaders have reinforced, and made more systematic, the approaches to teaching reading, writing and mathematics. For example, in mathematics, teachers help pupils to develop fluency and to use the most efficient methods of calculation. Younger pupils regularly use mathematics apparatus to help them understand mathematical concepts. All pupils, including the most able, have routine opportunities to attempt increasingly tricky mathematical problems. While teachers largely challenge the most able pupils well in their English and mathematics work, you recognise the need for even greater challenge for the most able pupils in subjects such as science and geography.
- Although a good proportion of the most able pupils met the higher standards expected of them by the end of key stage 2 last year, a smaller proportion of pupils overall reached a higher standard than did nationally. Similarly, at key stage 1 last year, a smaller proportion of pupils than average were working at greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics by the time they joined Year 3. Your tracking of pupils' progress is meticulous. This has helped you to identify those pupils who, given greater stretch, may be capable of reaching the higher standard. Teachers are better challenging these pupils so that progress is quickening across most year groups.

- As a British Council ambassador, you are passionate about pupils learning about diverse cultures so that they are well prepared for life in modern Britain. For example, pupils have a particularly well-developed knowledge about major world faiths. Teaching emphasises what religions and cultures have in common more than what is different. This helps pupils to respect others. You are planning how teachers can better help pupils to understand gender equality issues. The school parliament's motto is 'democracy in action'. Pupils understand how they can communicate their ideas to school councillors, who in turn help to make the school a better place. For example, the recent book swap organised by the school parliament was very popular. You give older pupils responsibilities, such as dinner helper or play leader. This provision makes a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Attendance has risen over the last few years, though was still a little behind the national average in 2017. You have supported the inclusion manager and redoubled the efforts to tackle unnecessary absence. Pupils enjoy the 'attendance-opoly' reward initiative. The stimulating curriculum and positive ethos means they want to attend school. Last term, attendance rose by a full percentage point compared with the same period last year, despite a spell of norovirus that affected many pupils. You are beginning to reduce the number of pupils who are persistently absent. There are very few disadvantaged pupils who miss school more than 10% of the time. The new breakfast club is making a positive difference. The few pupils whose parents have taken them abroad on unauthorised extended leave has had a disproportionately negative effect on the overall attendance rates.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- more pupils reach high standards and greater depth in their learning in a wide range of subjects by the end of each key stage
- improvement plans include more specific and measurable milestone learning and progress targets
- pupils are taught, in an age-appropriate way, about gender equality issues.

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

Yours sincerely

Philip Riozzi
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Throughout the day, I held discussions with you and the deputy headteacher about the impact of your actions. We visited some classrooms together to observe teaching and learning. With other senior leaders, we examined a sample of pupils' work in all subjects. I looked at a range of documents, including governing body minutes and records, notes from an independent external consultant, and safeguarding records. I discussed pupils' progress and attendance information with you. I met with two governors, including the vice-chair of governors. I chatted with a few groups of pupils to find out what it is like to be a pupil at the school. I considered the written responses of five parents to the parent survey, the 110 responses to the online pupil survey and the 24 responses from members of staff to the online staff survey.