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Mr Jeremy Bingham
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Bingham

Short inspection of East Markham Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 13 February 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 February 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You and the governing body have created a school ethos where pupils enjoy learning and feel supported and safe. It is clear that pupils love coming to this school. Unsurprisingly, they attend well. There have been several staff changes over the past few years. You and the assistant headteacher have ensured that these have disrupted pupils' learning as little as possible. Staff are enthusiastic and committed. All staff who responded to the questionnaire say that they are proud to work at the school. You have increased the number of classes so that more pupils are taught with others of the same age. As a result, indoor space for activities such as physical education is limited. You are creative and work very well with other organisations to ensure that pupils have a wide range of opportunities to be physically healthy. The 'mile a week' walking initiative is an example of this.

The school provides a well-rounded education that ensures that pupils thrive. The broad range of interesting activities supports pupils' all-round development. Pupils value opportunities, such as residential visits, to develop their independence. They recognise how teachers are helping them to become more resilient in their learning. They understand the need to stick at tasks when they become more difficult. In class, pupils have opportunities to work in different ways, such as when they are editing their writing with a partner. Pupils' positive attitudes and good behaviour make a major contribution to their good progress. Pupils of all ages play together well on the playground. Older pupils help the younger ones with their games and act as 'line leaders' when it is time to return to class. Parents and carers praise the commitment of staff and the caring nature of the school. One parent said, 'The village is proud of the school. It feels very much like a family.'

Teachers know pupils very well and, as a result, they plan learning that helps pupils make good progress. You and other leaders have a good understanding of the current strengths in teaching and aspects that are not as strong. You do this through regular visits to classrooms and analysing information about pupils' progress. You have addressed the areas identified for improvement at the last inspection. Pupils achieve high standards in writing because of the many opportunities they have to practise their skills. Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. You know that pupils' calculation skills are strong. However, they are less proficient in explaining their mathematical reasoning. You have provided staff with training and support so that they improve their skills and feel more confident in this area. Consequently, more of your current pupils are making good progress and reaching the expected standard. You rightly recognise that more work is needed to ensure that the most able pupils are consistently challenged to reach the higher standard.

Safeguarding is effective.

School leaders, including the governing body, have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Staff receive regular training and are reminded frequently about their duties to safeguard pupils. Consequently, they know what they should do if they have any concerns about a pupil. You keep accurate records and have a clear picture of pupils' needs. You work effectively with outside agencies in order to keep pupils safe.

Leaders ensure that the required checks are completed to ensure that staff and volunteers are suitable to work in the school. The governing body undertakes regular training and visits to check that safeguarding arrangements are effective.

Pupils feel safe in school. All of the pupils I spoke to, and those who responded to the online questionnaire, say that they feel safe. They learn how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations, such as in case of fire or when crossing the road. They also know how to make sensible choices when they are online. Pupils say that bullying is very rare but are confident that if it did happen, teachers would deal with it quickly and effectively. However, they say that some adults do not fully listen to their concerns at lunchtimes. You are aware of this and plan further training. The very large majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, agree that their children feel happy and safe in school.

Inspection findings

- Over time, pupils have left East Markham Primary School well prepared for their secondary education. They have achieved well and have positive attitudes to learning.
- In 2016, fewer girls achieved the higher standard in both reading and mathematics than might be expected and their progress was below that of their peers nationally. You acted immediately to improve pupils' ability to answer more complex questions. You provided staff with training and support. In 2017, a greater proportion reached the higher standard. You have ensured that teachers in key stage 2 maintain this focus in order to achieve even higher standards. You are now identifying the most effective strategies so that they are used in all classrooms. You have given parents more information about how they can support their child's reading and mathematics at home. Girls talked to me

with enthusiasm about how much they enjoy reading and its importance. One girl said, 'a book can take you somewhere else'. Teachers give pupils clear feedback on the skills they need to develop further. Inspection evidence indicates that current Year 6 girls are achieving well.

- During the inspection, we looked at the progress made by children in their first year at the school. The Reception classroom is bright and inviting and the teacher plans very effectively for all areas of children's learning. The outdoor area has been improved to support and develop children's curiosity and independence. Children are attentive and keen to learn, for example when practising their cursive handwriting or rehearsing the sounds that they have learned in phonics. As in the rest of the school, children are learning how to edit and improve their own writing. The Reception teacher has worked closely with the on-site pre-school to improve communication and to ensure that children are ready to start school. I spoke with several parents of Reception children and all were full of praise for the care and challenge that their child receives. As a result of these improvements, a greater proportion of pupils than that seen nationally reached a good level of development in 2017. Children make good progress from their broadly typical starting points.
- At the last inspection, you were asked to look at the way that you check on pupils' progress. You now meet frequently with class teachers to discuss how well pupils are learning and what extra help some may need. You use this information to ensure that appropriate provision is in place. Leaders and the governing body check regularly on the impact of these interventions and change them where necessary. As a result, pupils are making good progress from their starting points. You now use an electronic tracking system to support your analysis of trends and the progress of groups. You report this information to the governing body so that its members can ask questions and challenge leaders to improve further. You recognise that leaders and staff need more training to make full use of this system. Plans for this are in hand.
- You and I also looked at the progress pupils make in reading in key stage 1. Their progress in this area is not as strong as it is in writing and mathematics. Pupils reach broadly average standards in the phonics screening check in Year 1 and in national assessments at the end of Year 2. You have recognised that pupils need to read more at home and at school. School staff and volunteers hear children read regularly. You have encouraged parents to listen to their child read more often at home and there is a reward scheme. Pupils respond enthusiastically to this. When we visited classrooms and looked at assessment information, we noted that progress is slower for pupils with lower starting points. Teachers do not always plan tasks that enable these pupils to make faster progress and so catch up with their peers.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers use assessment information more effectively to plan for and address the gaps in pupils' reading skills, particularly those with low starting points
- teachers plan challenging activities to develop pupils' mathematical problem-solving and reasoning skills so that a greater proportion of pupils achieve the higher standard.

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

Yours sincerely

Joanne Sanchez-Thompson
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I visited all classes with you to observe teaching, learning and assessment. We also checked pupils' progress in their workbooks. We discussed the school's effectiveness and the actions taken to ensure the school's continued improvement.

I met with leaders with responsibility for English and the early years. I spoke with four governors. I met with a group of girls from Years 3 to 6 and talked informally with other pupils in lessons and during playtime. I met with parents on the playground at the beginning of the school day.

I looked at a range of documents, including your evaluation of the school's effectiveness and the school's improvement plan. I also scrutinised the school's safeguarding systems, records and associated documents. I checked assessment information on how well pupils are achieving. I considered 32 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 27 free-text comments from parents. I also considered nine responses to the online staff questionnaire and 37 responses to the pupil questionnaire.