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Miss Andrea Tunney
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Dear Miss Tunney

Short inspection of Norton Infant School

Following my visit to the school on 20 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 July 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Leaders and governors have maintained high standards at Norton Infant School; pupils and children achieve well. Outcomes at the end of key stage 1 have been consistently above average since the last inspection. The proportion of children who are ready for learning in Year 1, having achieved a good level of development in the early years, has remained slightly above national averages over the last two years.

Since your appointment, your strong and steadfast leadership has maintained the good standards that pupils achieve. Together with your leadership team, you have prioritised the actions needed to bring about the most essential changes at the school. You have set high expectations of staff and pupils, which all leaders, governors and staff buy into. Staff morale is high and there is a strong sense of teamwork in the school.

The governing body is made up of a committed and experienced group of individuals. They know what the school does well and know which areas need strengthening. They provide you with effective support and challenge to fulfil the aims and ambitions for pupils and offer you clear strategic direction. As a result, governors are ensuring that pupils are supported to be the best they can be.

At the last inspection, leaders were asked to improve teaching by ensuring that

teachers: plan work that matches pupils' needs, especially the most able; ask more probing questions that deepen pupils' understanding; and ensure that pupils understand clearly what they are going to learn.

The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection. Teachers have received, and are continuing to receive, good professional development opportunities to improve their practice. Evidence from observations during the inspection shows that teachers are mostly asking probing questions that stretch and challenge pupils. During lessons, teachers ensure that pupils know what they are learning and how it builds on previous learning. Teachers use assessment on an ongoing basis to support their planning and ensure that pupils' needs are met, including those pupils who are most able. As a result, the proportion of pupils attaining the higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics in key stage 1 has remained above average for the previous two years.

Recommendations from the previous inspection urged leaders to implement more rigorous systems to check the quality of teaching and learning. What became very clear during the inspection is how all leaders work as a team to drive improvement. Leaders, including subject leaders, regularly monitor the quality of teaching and its impact on learning. They reflect on their findings accurately and honestly and review pupils' progress each term, acting swiftly on any underperformance.

You and governors are understandably proud of the school's strengths and accomplishments. However, you are not complacent and are continually reflecting on the school's performance and how the quality of teaching and learning can improve further. Self-evaluation and reflecting on current practice is a key strength of the school. As a result, you recognise that there is now further work to do in ensuring that disadvantaged pupils make more rapid progress and that most-able pupils in the early years are routinely challenged.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have created a strong culture around keeping pupils safe and have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Staff are appropriately trained and are confident in what action they would take if they had a concern. Staff recruitment procedures meet requirements.

Leaders ensure that the up-to-date safeguarding policy is reflected in practice. Records are well organised and accurate. When necessary, you work effectively with outside agencies and are tenacious in securing appropriate and timely responses to your concerns. In addition, you ensure that appropriate procedures are followed when a child leaves the school so that vulnerable pupils continue to get the support that they need. Pupils said that they feel safe in school and they are taught about risks that they may encounter when using the internet. Parents and carers said that they are confident that their children are safe and well cared for.

Inspection findings

- Leadership is a key strength; your strong direction has ensured the continued success of the school. In addition, you have nurtured and developed a very effective leadership team that gives you good support in fulfilling your aims.
- I wanted to determine how well pupils from low starting points in key stage 1 are being supported, so that more attain the expected standard for their age in reading and writing. You have put into place additional support for pupils who are underachieving. Leaders monitor this support closely. As a result, pupils from low starting points are now making stronger progress.
- You established that standards in writing were not as strong as for reading and mathematics. You and your leaders have introduced a more engaging and creative English curriculum that is enthusing pupils through drama and more stimulating activities. This is raising standards for all pupils. Evidence in pupils' books is showing that this is having a positive impact, and some of their writing is quite impressive.
- The progress of some disadvantaged pupils within school is slower than that of other pupils. You and your leaders have been proactive in addressing this and have put into place a range of additional support. You monitor the progress of these pupils closely and quickly address any underperformance. However, you rightly acknowledge that these actions need to be embedded fully in order to reduce the differences in outcomes between these pupils and other pupils nationally.
- I also focused on whether the most able children in the early years are being sufficiently challenged, especially in mathematics. You and your leaders had already established that these children are not routinely challenged in different areas of the curriculum. Consequently they are not achieving the standards of which they are capable. Your early years leader is working closely with good and outstanding providers and has reviewed provision as a result. However, you quite rightly acknowledge that the impact of this is not yet evident.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- recent strategies to improve the progress of disadvantaged pupils in the school are firmly embedded
- the most able pupils in early years are routinely challenged so that a greater proportion exceed the expectations for their age.

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

Yours sincerely

Alan Chaffey
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, the deputy head of school, the early years leader and subject leaders for English and mathematics. I also met with seven members of the governing body and a local authority representative. I spoke with pupils informally during lunchtime and when listening to pupils read. I made short visits to every classroom, most of them with you, and we looked at pupils' books. I scrutinised various documents, including the school's self-evaluation and safeguarding documents. I considered the 30 responses to Ofsted's online pupil survey, the 13 responses to the staff survey, the 33 responses to Ofsted's online parent questionnaire, Parent View, and 29 free-text responses to Parent View.