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Miss Fiona Marsh
Headteacher
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Dear Miss Marsh

Short inspection of Marsh Lane Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 27 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 April 2014.

This school continues to be good.

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

Marsh Lane is a small school that is characterised by its warm, caring and welcoming atmosphere. The pupils are at the heart of every aspect of school life. Every pupil is highly valued and known well by you and the other staff. There is a deep commitment from all staff to unlock the potential in every child. As a result, all pupils are effectively supported to 'dream, believe, achieve and succeed'.

You lead the school with energy and enthusiasm and have the respect of pupils, parents and carers, and staff alike. You ensure that this very small school is a harmonious and productive place to be. You have a good working knowledge of everyday matters, as well as the strategic overview needed to shape and drive further improvements. You have successfully tackled the areas for improvement from the last inspection. You have evaluated the school accurately. Leaders, governors and staff have the capacity to make improvements successfully. You acknowledge, however, that the school's written plans for improvement are not sharp enough.

Teachers consistently create a positive climate for learning and have high expectations. As a result, pupils are enthusiastic and confident learners. Our visits to several classes provided good examples of this. In the Year 3/4 class, pupils were discussing the equipment they would need for a polar expedition. The teacher had

superbly planned an outdoor activity in the snow and freezing temperatures to enliven this work. In the Year 4/5 class, pupils were using accurate mathematical language to explain their understanding of symmetry. Children in the Reception class were very excited to tell me about a problem they had solved. Cinderella had packed too many things in her suitcase. They explained how they had successfully halved the number of items to solve this problem for her. Despite this, teaching varies too much. Sometimes activities do not provide enough challenge for the most able pupils. This means that they do not reach the high standards of which they are capable.

Children make excellent progress in their first year in school. The caring ethos of the school is mirrored in early years. Adults have an excellent understanding of how young children learn. They listen carefully to the children, observe their interests and fascinations, and then skillfully capture these in their planning. The learning environments, both indoors and outdoors, are magnets for learning. Children enjoy countless opportunities to explore and think about their learning. As a result, children are very well prepared for the next stage in their education.

I spoke with many parents at the beginning of the school day. Parents were unreservedly positive about the school and hold you in high regard. Parents particularly value the caring family ethos that you have created. Inspection evidence supports these positive views about the school.

Safeguarding is effective.

A strong culture of safeguarding is woven through all aspects of the school's work. You ensure that the safeguarding of pupils is a high priority. Staff are vetted carefully prior to appointment and all of the necessary checks are made to ensure that they are suitable to work with children. You ensure that staff receive the required training, including that relating to protecting pupils from extremism and radicalisation. All staff are highly vigilant and well aware of the actions they need to take if they are concerned about a child's welfare. Parents expressed confidence in the school to follow up any concerns. They told me that you do everything possible to ensure that their children are safe and happy.

Pupils have a good knowledge of potential bullying situations. They are adamant that bullying does not exist at Marsh Lane Primary. They say that poor behaviour is rare and that staff deal with any concerns swiftly. This is confirmed by the school's records. Pupils are taught effectively about how to keep themselves safe when they are using the internet. They know the immediate actions to take if they view anything that causes them concern.

Pupils' attendance is above the national average. Pupils value their education and understand the importance of coming to school regularly.

Inspection findings

- You have created a culture of success at the school because your high expectations are clear to staff and pupils. As a result, pupils develop a love of learning and want to do their best.
- Governors are enthusiastic and form an effective team. The governing body is committed to ensuring that the school provides a good education so that pupils can achieve well academically and personally. Governors share your vision for further improvement. The governing body maintains a careful oversight of all areas of the school's work. Governors visit the school regularly to gain secure, first-hand knowledge of what is happening on the ground.
- We agreed that the school's plans for improvement identify too ambitious a range of actions to complete in one year. As a result, they are not effective enough. It is unclear when many actions are due to start or who will check that they are being done. It is also not clear how the actions will be monitored for effectiveness. This risks some actions not occurring, or being allowed to continue even if they are not bringing about the changes needed.
- You have an accurate picture of teaching across the school. Further improvements to teaching are at the heart of the school's work. You have rightly identified that not all teaching provides the right challenges for pupils of all abilities. In particular, the most able pupils do not always make as much progress as they should. You are taking swift action to remedy any weaknesses through providing relevant support, challenge, advice or training.
- Pupils excel in writing. Writing is securely embedded throughout the curriculum. Pupils' work shows that they are provided with a good range of stimuli for writing. Pupils know how to apply the features of good writing across different genres. They use their technical skills of spelling, grammar and punctuation correctly. Pupils' handwriting and presentation are neat and of a very high standard. Eye-catching displays around the school celebrate pupils' high levels of confidence in writing for a variety of purposes.
- You have acted promptly to tackle the recent dip in the progress of pupils in reading, particularly at key stage 2. As a result of careful analysis of pupils' performance, you have put in place a wide range of actions. For example, you have devised a whole-school strategy for daily guided reading, refurbished the book corners in every class and introduced class 'reading races'. Staff regularly check pupils' reading records. You have provided comprehensive training for all staff. You are working effectively with parents to increase the time pupils spend reading for pleasure at home. You are also developing the role of the link governor for reading. As a result, teaching is successfully helping pupils to develop a love of reading. The school's most recent assessment information confirms that pupils are making good progress with their reading throughout the school.
- Pupils are proud ambassadors for their school. They thoroughly enjoy school life together. In lessons, pupils sustain good concentration and try hard with their work. Around the school and at breaktimes and lunchtimes, pupils' behaviour is calm and considerate. It is often exemplary. Pupils respect the school

environment and treat each other with notable respect, care and kindness.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they improve the effectiveness of the school's improvement plans by including precise timescales for starting, criteria against which to measure success, and a record of who should check that actions have been taken and when the checks should be done
- teachers consistently provide challenging work for the most able pupils throughout the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Dorothy Bathgate
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and the senior teacher, four members of the governing body and a group of pupils. I held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. I visited all classes to see pupils and staff at work. I observed pupils' behaviour around the school and during lessons. I met a number of parents informally at the beginning of the school day. I considered the views of 36 parents posted on Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, as well as the 36 responses parents made using the free-text service. I also considered the 40 responses to Ofsted's survey for pupils and the eight responses to the survey of staff. I evaluated a range of documents, including safeguarding records and policies.