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Mrs Eileen Gunton
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Gunton

Short inspection of Woodthorpe CofE Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 13 March 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 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained and improved the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Along with your deputy headteacher and governors, you continue to provide strong leadership to this school. Although full, the school is small. The caring ethos is a feature within an inclusive and welcoming culture.

This welcome begins at the gate where parents and carers gather, knowing that you or your deputy will be there to listen to any concerns or simply to talk. Many parents took the opportunity to tell me how delighted they were with the school. They told me about the 'open door for all parents', that 'qualms are sorted out straight away' and that their children 'love coming to school'. Although extremely positive, parents are not completely uncritical. They are as ambitious as you are that their children are happy and learn well. For example, a couple of parents spoke about challenge for the most able children, saying that there is scope for more. This was an aspect of the school that I looked at carefully during my visit.

The constructive relationship with parents is not an accident. For example, the online system used in the Reception class and throughout key stage 1 enables teachers and parents to share photographs and explanations securely about their own children and their learning. This forges strong partnerships between home and school from the start. For those parents whose children are more vulnerable, the

quality of communication between school and home is highly valued. Many examples were shared at the gate and through Parent View, Ofsted's survey for parents.

You ensure that the children are at the heart of this friendly school. Pupils are eager to learn. They were seen making choices about the level of challenge they needed in mathematics lessons, with choices labelled bronze, silver, gold and platinum. One pupil was seen working on a challenging question at the edge of his knowledge, while nearby another pupil was consolidating her understanding of what fractions mean. Pupils' excellent learning behaviour was evident in most classes visited during this inspection. Pupils were discussing the questions in front of them and helping each other. They were polite, cooperative and kind to each other. Their attendance and conduct are good. You are right to feel very proud of them.

You and your staff have addressed the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. You introduced French into the curriculum almost straight away. It is well established. Pupils are now exposed to a range of engaging activities as they learn to converse in French. Other areas for improvement were looked at more closely during this inspection. Detail will follow later in this letter.

Pupils' progress, evident in 2017 outcomes and during this inspection, has improved in Reception and key stage 1, and is now consistently good from all starting points and for pupils who are disadvantaged. Pupils' knowledge of phonics is strong. At key stage 2, there is also good progress made to the expected standard by the end of Year 6. There is still room for more of the most able pupils to reach the highest standards, especially in reading and writing.

Safeguarding is effective.

Numbers are small and you know the pupils well. As the school's designated safeguarding officer, you have ensured that staff are trained and know what to do if they have a concern. Training for staff is regular and so their knowledge is kept up to date. Training covers a range of potential safeguarding risks. Recruitment procedures are secure. Policy and practice take account of the most recent legislation. You ensure that safeguarding records are kept, and you take decisive action where necessary to ensure that each child is protected. You work effectively with other agencies to keep pupils safe and secure.

Pupils' conduct and support for each other play a significant part in their feeling of safety when in school. In informal conversations with me, they were happy and communicative. A wall display on e-safety captures some of the work done by pupils to keep their friends safe from possible dangers. The site is securely fenced, and governors are alert to any potential dangers arising from the old building. Visitors are checked on arrival to make sure that they are who they say they are. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose.

Inspection findings

- Leaders and governors had already identified that although the most able pupils are now making better progress, there are still a few areas where this could be improved.
- Pupil numbers are small and so it is more difficult to identify patterns in progress information. Nevertheless, you monitor pupils' progress rigorously throughout the year, using detailed 'pupil on a page' summaries to ensure that interventions are timely and effective. Current information suggests that the strong progress seen last year through Reception and key stage 1 will continue, including for the most able pupils.
- In key stage 2, there is less consistency in teaching and in progress. Most, but not all, lessons seen during this inspection included activities pitched with high challenge. Particularly in mathematics, tasks were usually well matched to the pupils' understanding, while books showed a variety of reasoning, problem-solving and application activities. You monitor teaching as carefully as you monitor pupils' progress and intervene effectively where there is inconsistency. You are aware that some aspects of provision in key stage 2 need to be improved.
- We looked at the quality of writing in the work of the most able pupils in Year 5 and Year 6. Although pupils are experimenting with vocabulary and styles, there is a lack of proficiency in current work, particularly in the skilled use of writing techniques for effect. Leaders and teachers have made sure that pupils' writing is set in a context. While this has ensured a broad and interesting curriculum, which has clearly engaged the pupils' interest and enthusiasm, there has been less emphasis on a study of writers' use of language. Pupils' writing was accurate but did not display appropriate sophistication of style in most of the examples seen.
- Your support for disadvantaged pupils is strong. Governors ensure that the additional funding provided through the pupil premium is used well. Your rigorous monitoring of pupils' progress leads to well-directed support. In 2017, disadvantaged pupils made progress which was even better than their peers' in both key stage 1 and 2. At the end of Reception, although not reaching a good level of development in such high proportions in 2017, nevertheless the progress of disadvantaged pupils was good. Your monitoring of current pupils shows that your pupil premium strategy is very effective.
- Monitoring of pupils' progress and of the quality of teaching is robust, and you take action to bring improvement where you identify shortcomings. For pupils who are falling behind, additional support is provided. Leaders provide training and coaching to ensure that the quality of teaching remains consistently good. Governors challenge leaders when they receive regular, detailed information about these matters.
- Governors make sure that the information they are given is accurate by visiting the school and by reference to external sources of information about the school, such as published performance information, with the support of the local authority adviser.

- The school improvement plan lacks precision in some respects. It does not consistently identify what leaders hope to achieve or how they can measure this success and governors monitor it. There are no milestones, and so leaders and governors cannot easily check if the school is on track with planned improvements. An example in the current plan concerns reading for the most able pupils. Leaders have identified this correctly, but the plan does not specify what you are aiming to achieve in a form that can be measured.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the rate of pupils' progress increases so that more pupils reach the highest standard by the end of key stage 2, particularly in reading and writing
- they refine the school improvement plan so that actions are linked to milestones that are checked regularly and success criteria that can be measured.

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

Yours sincerely

Joanne Ward
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I considered evidence from a range of sources, including the previous inspection report and information about the school's performance in 2016 and 2017. I looked at the school's website. I spoke with several parents at the gate, and I considered 26 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, the Ofsted pupil and staff surveys and the results of a recent school survey of 75 parents. Meetings were held with you, school leaders and governors to discuss progress since the last inspection. I considered a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans, the pupil premium strategy, provision plans called 'pupil on a page', evidence of leaders' monitoring, the single central record of the checks on staff and volunteers, a sample of recruitment files, the safeguarding policy and records of actions taken to protect pupils' welfare. I looked at training records. I talked with staff to make sure that they knew what to do if they were concerned about a child. We jointly made visits to lessons, looked at the quality of work in pupils' books and spoke with pupils. I talked to a representative of the local authority on the telephone. I observed and talked to pupils at breaktime.