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Mr John Richardson
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Richardson

Short inspection of The South Hykeham Community Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 3 May 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 December 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 the last inspection the school has grown to six classes, with a larger year cohort in Year 2. This has resulted in fewer mixed-age classes. The size of other cohorts has remained approximately the same. As cohorts are small, the progress and attainment of individual pupils influences overall attainment significantly.

You and the leadership team responded quickly to the fall in progress in 2016. Due to small cohort sizes, the few pupils who did not make as much progress as they should affected the overall progress measures. However, you did not use this as an excuse and were determined to make changes in order to raise standards.

In the last inspection report, leaders were asked to ensure that work in mixed-age classes is pitched at the right level for pupils. Teachers use their subject knowledge to set tasks at appropriate levels to meet the needs of different learners. Pupils' workbooks show that they are encouraged to select tasks that challenge them to achieve more. Teachers and other adults intervene if pupils select tasks that are too hard or do not provide enough challenge. Teachers ensure that pupils have the right knowledge and skills to access the tasks and provide them with appropriate challenges.

Recent professional development for staff has focused on developing the teaching of reading and mathematics. Teachers and teaching assistants value the training

they receive. Middle leaders feel encouraged to develop their subjects and are keen to innovate in order to bring about improvements. They are aware that the school's current system for tracking the progress that pupils make is not providing them with precise information and are keen to make adjustments to deliver what they need.

You have maintained the good quality of teaching and learning since the last inspection. However, pupils' workbooks show that teachers' expectations of pupils' presentation and handwriting are not as high as they could be. Despite a focus on developing pupils' spelling, this has not yet transferred into pupils' writing in their workbooks. Leaders have introduced a system for monitoring the progress that pupils make across the school. However, this is not developed well enough to provide an accurate picture of the amount of progress pupils are making. As a result, the potential underachievement of some pupils is unclear.

Governors are passionate about the school. They are reflective about the fall in standards in the past and are keen to look to the future to provide pupils with the best education possible. They use the information they receive to challenge leaders and together strive to provide pupils with the best education possible.

Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school; those I spoke with were very complimentary of the staff and the leadership team. They feel that were they to have a problem, staff would deal with this quickly and effectively. Parents are particularly happy with the supportive family feel of the school. They appreciate the efforts that you and the staff go to in order to get to know pupils and families personally.

Pupils speak highly of their teachers and support staff. They appreciate teachers' efforts to make learning challenging, yet fun. They particularly appreciate it when they use technology to develop their learning. Pupils feel safe in school and know that there is always someone available if they have a problem. They have a good understanding of equality, with one pupil saying, 'We are all human, but we have different personalities.' Pupils use their knowledge of how to keep themselves safe when using the internet, including when using social media and online games.

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. In all classes, pupils worked diligently and were supportive of each other when tasks were challenging. Around the school, pupils are exceptionally polite and welcoming of visitors, opening doors, shaking hands and asking pertinent and appropriate questions to get to know people better.

Safeguarding is effective.

The designated safeguarding leaders have ensured that all staff participate in a regular programme of professional development to safeguard pupils. Recent training includes safeguarding pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, and the 'Prevent duty'. Staff who I spoke with were aware of the different forms of abuse and knew the correct channels to report concerns. Staff are aware of the additional needs of vulnerable pupils and staff work together to monitor the well-being of pupils at risk of harm.

Governors are well-informed about safeguarding and use the expertise within the governing body to ensure that processes and procedures are robust and fit for purpose. The governor responsible for safeguarding completes 'no notice' safeguarding monitoring visits to check that staff training is put into practice.

Inspection findings

- You and the leadership team have recognised that pupils were not making as much progress as they should in reading. The English leader has focused on raising the profile of reading with pupils and parents. Parents were asked to take a more active role in encouraging pupils to read outside of school, challenging both parents and pupils to take part in extreme reading challenges. Teachers are using whole-class book study to share books and to develop pupils' comprehension, inference and deduction skills. As a result, in 2017 the progress pupils made in reading improved and was in line with that of pupils nationally.
- Improvements have been made to the teaching of mathematics across the school. The mathematics leader has rewritten the calculations policy and provided training for all staff to ensure continuity and progression of skills across the school. A focus on reasoning has ensured that all pupils are provided with opportunities to apply their understanding to problem-solving tasks. In 2017, pupils' progress in mathematics rose to be in line with the national average.
- Pupils' workbooks show that the curriculum provides pupils with many opportunities to learn about different cultures, races and religions. Pupils from the early years through to Year 6 learn about places that are different to where they live. Pupils in Reception talked with enthusiasm about the Antarctic and knew that was where penguins live, while pupils in key stage 2 explained about rainforest and mountain environments. Leaders have developed links with schools in Malta and Kenya.
- The early years leader is tenacious in keeping records that show the progress that children are making. She has a precise view of children's next steps and uses this knowledge effectively to ensure that additional needs are well catered for.
- Pupils in key stage 1 are challenged well and teachers' good subject knowledge ensures that tasks are planned well to meet the needs of pupils. Small cohort sizes have affected progress and attainment measures for individual cohorts. The drop in attainment between the early years and key stage 1 in some instances is due to pupil mobility and a fluctuation in cohort sizes. However, occasionally due to the school's assessment system not focusing closely enough on pupils' progress, the underachievement of some pupils is not identified quickly enough.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- develop the school's assessment system to ensure that pupils' progress is monitored effectively
- raise teachers' expectations of the pupils' standards of presentation and writing

- develop the school's approach to spelling to ensure that pupils transfer spelling skills into their written work.

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

Yours sincerely

Helen Williams
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and six governors, including the chair of the governing body. I spoke with the deputy headteacher (who is also the early years leader, pupil premium lead and leader for the provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities), the mathematics and English coordinators and the office administrator. I spoke with eight pupils from each year group. We toured the school together and observed learning taking place during the morning. This included writing and mathematics lessons.

During our tour of the school, I scrutinised a selection of pupils' workbooks. I examined a range of the school's documentation including its self-evaluation document, improvement plan and documents relating to safeguarding. I considered published and internal information about pupils' attainment and progress.

I considered the views of parents by speaking with them before school. I also considered the 90 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and the 16 responses to the staff survey.