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Miss Louise Thomas
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Dear Miss Thomas

Short inspection of The John Bamford Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 16 October 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 November 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You provide a clear vision and have high expectations of what your staff and pupils can achieve. You have successfully addressed the key areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. Pupils are now making more progress in writing and mathematics than at the time of the previous inspection because of your effective leadership. A high proportion of Year 6 pupils who left the school in July 2018 reached the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics after making more than average progress.

From their individual starting points when children join Nursery, they make fast progress in their learning because of highly effective teaching. The proportion of children reaching a good level of development at the end of Reception remains high. The teaching of early reading skills in your school continues to be effective and pupils attain high outcomes in the phonics screening check. Pupils' progress and attainment in reading in key stage 1 and key stage 2 have increased well because of the relentless focus of your staff on fostering a love of reading. This is clearly a strength of the school.

You have successfully restructured your leadership team during the past year, leaving the school well placed to improve further. In partnership with your deputy, who joined the school in September 2018, you astutely identify where relative weaknesses remain in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.

Governors are very knowledgeable about groups of pupils and the subjects in which

they could attain even higher standards. They are passionate about making sure that all pupils get the best possible education at John Bamford. Your leadership group is working successfully with governors to plan carefully for the next steps in improvement. Improvement plans are well structured and aspirational. They make it easy to check on how well your school is progressing towards achieving your goals because of their clear milestones and success criteria. Monitoring activities by those responsible for subjects and phases are not currently as rigorous as they could be.

Your pupils display an immense sense of pride in their school. They speak of enjoying lessons that make them think hard, and being able to use their basic literacy and numeracy skills in a range of other subjects. The 'adventure' curriculum successfully ignites pupils' enthusiasm for learning and this is helping them to achieve academic success.

Such is the highly infectious team spirit among your staff that all those responding to the Ofsted staff questionnaire agree they are proud to be working at John Bamford. Parents and carers are similarly proud that their children attend your school and benefit from the care and support they receive to be successful in their learning.

There is the potential for more pupils who have reached the expected standard in writing and mathematics to be challenged and supported to reach greater depth in writing and/or the higher standard in mathematics. Your plans for all pupils to be given more time to use their spelling, punctuation and grammar skills in extended pieces of writing are not consistently implemented. Occasionally, pupils have too few good-quality opportunities to explain their reasoning behind how they have solved problems in mathematics.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have highly effective procedures and systems for helping to keep children safe in school. Your policies are reviewed regularly and up to date. You have an orderly recording system which enables you to track your concerns effectively. You make sure that all required checks are carried out before staff take up their appointments. You have established a secure culture of safeguarding at John Bamford.

Pupils are taught about the dangers of the internet and what they should do to protect themselves. E-safety is given a high priority by you and your staff. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose.

Inspection findings

- School improvement planning is being used effectively to bring about even better teaching, learning and assessment strategies which, in turn, are accelerating pupils' progress. You have built in measurable targets which are aspirational because you expect pupils to work hard to achieve them. Governors carefully track how much progress you are making towards achieving your goals. They regularly ask for evidence to support what they are being told to hold senior and

middle leaders to account and to check on how well the school is improving.

- Pupils' progress and attainment in reading are high because of effective teaching. A love of reading is effectively promoted in school through each classroom having an inviting area in which pupils can spend time enjoying texts. From their earliest days in school, children are exposed to language-rich classrooms which support their learning well and help them to achieve high standards. Many older pupils reach the higher standard in reading because of the high quality of teaching of this subject.
- Pupils' books show that they are making good progress in their learning from their individual starting points. Clearly, school leaders have acted successfully to improve pupils' progress in writing during the past year. Pupils' books in a few classes showed that they are usually given good opportunities to use their spelling, grammar and punctuation skills in writing longer pieces of writing. However, this is not always the case.
- Mathematics books also show that many pupils are making good progress in their learning. In many mathematics lessons, pupils are given effective opportunities to explain their reasoning behind how they approach problems, but this is not consistent across all year groups. Occasionally, average pupils are making less impressive progress than other pupils because they are not sufficiently challenged to reach the higher standard. In a few pupils' books, it is clear that teachers could have higher expectations of their pupils.
- In lessons, pupils display highly positive attitudes to their learning. They are attentive and eager to please. In classrooms, pupils participate enthusiastically in lessons which are skilfully designed to extend their learning. Pupils speak eloquently about how well teachers help them learn in lessons.
- Senior and middle leaders, together with governors, regularly undertake learning walks and book scrutinies to check how well pupils are learning in a range of subjects. There is a schedule of monitoring activities for the academic year specifically focused on aspects of high-quality learning. These activities are not currently sufficiently tight to help improve the consistency of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment as much as they could, because some of them have not focused well enough on pupils' learning.
- The proportion of pupils persistently absent from school increased slightly in the last school year despite the best efforts of school leaders, including governors, to arrest it. Governors are heavily involved in working with school leaders to impress upon parents just how important it is for their children to attend school regularly. They are working closely with the education welfare service to reduce the proportion of pupils regularly absent from school. There is a huge focus in school on celebrating regular attendance and keeping the profile of this initiative high.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they increase the proportion of pupils reaching the higher standard in writing and mathematics by ensuring that there is greater challenge for pupils with average prior attainment in writing and mathematics
- pupils are given more opportunities to explain their reasoning well in mathematics
- pupils are given more opportunities to use their knowledge of spelling, punctuation and grammar in longer pieces of writing
- they sharpen school monitoring processes to further improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and ensure that all teachers have consistently high expectations.

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

Yours sincerely

Declan McCauley
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and the teaching staff. I also met with the chair and vice-chair of the governing body and had a telephone conversation with a local authority officer. I carried out a joint learning walk with you and with your deputy when we looked in pupils' books and spoke with pupils about their work.

By the end of the inspection, there were 35 recent responses on Parent View and 21 written comments. There were 21 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire. I took account of these responses and talked with some pupils and parents about their experiences of school life.

I looked at several documents, including pupils' progress information, the school's own evaluation of its performance, improvement plans, information about the work of the governing body, and records of leaders' checks on the quality of teaching and learning. I also checked the school's website and the procedures for keeping pupils safe.