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Mrs Samantha Woolhouse  
Headteacher  
Northfield Infant School  
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Dear Mrs Woolhouse

### **Short inspection of Northfield Infant School**

Following my visit to the school on 4 December 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 September 2014.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

You have shown tenacious leadership to move the school forward since the previous inspection. You have engendered strong morale among staff and governors who all share your high aspirations for pupils. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school and all that it offers their children. Parents were unequivocal in their praise, telling me that the school is 'Brilliant – what more could we ask for?' They value the excellent care staff take of their children to keep them safe and happy in school. Following some shortfalls in the school's performance in the national assessments and tests in 2018, you have identified, precisely, the most urgent priorities to improve provision. There is telling evidence that pupils are making more rapid progress this year, particularly in reading and writing. These were subjects that were relatively weak in 2018. Teaching is consistently good and all leaders are very effective in their roles to initiate improvements. The improvements instigated benefit both pupils' personal development and their academic progress effectively. Everyone's commitment to the school is evident in the way leaders, governors and staff support each other in their endeavours. Teamwork is the cornerstone of the school's ethos. Leaders and governors have the expertise and skills to improve the school further. Your aspirations to be outstanding in the future are realistic.

Pupils feel safe and happy in the school's calm, well ordered and welcoming environment. They are very proud of their school and were keen to tell me why they love being there. A number stated that 'I love my school because we have fun and we learn lots every day.' They form trusting relationships with teachers, who they know will help them if they cannot do anything. They enjoy many enrichment opportunities, for example visitors in school, sports clubs and visits out. Parents lend their support. They organise fund raising and social events to extend pupils' personal development and deepen their understanding of their responsibility to support others. With an increased focus on ensuring that basic skills of reading, writing and mathematics are embedded well, pupils are making good

progress. An increased proportion of pupils are working at the higher standard in all classes. Consequently, pupils at the end of Year 2 are prepared well for key stage 2.

Your expectations of all staff are high and, to that end, you ensure that they have the training and support they need to be effective in their roles. You encourage everyone to have their say in improvement planning. Your plans are clear, precise and well measured. All leaders, including governors, are involved in checking that improvements have the impact they should. One of the key issues identified in the previous inspection report was to improve teaching so that more of it was outstanding. Teaching is improving strongly, with examples of exemplary practice across the school. Expectations of pupils are generally high, with most pupils challenged well. A few less confident learners could achieve more, with further challenge and increased support. The second key issue in the 2014 report was to develop the roles of middle leaders. You have addressed this effectively. You encourage staff to share ideas and work with partner schools. As a result, they learn from others and recognise how they can strengthen their practice. Pupils' progress is monitored closely and leaders act promptly if pupils need extra support to achieve well. Although outcomes in 2018 showed a decline on the otherwise improving trend previously, a few pupils did not achieve as well as they should have for various reasons. All these pupils joined the school partway in key stage 1 and did not benefit fully from all that the school offers over time.

All staff know what you expect of them and you provide effective support to ensure that teachers achieve the targets you set for them. Recent improvements in the teaching of writing, particularly handwriting, presentation and spelling, are having a positive impact on raising standards. However, practice is still variable. Careless errors creep in because some pupils do not always check their work carefully enough to get it right first time. Pupils learn phonics and basic rules of punctuation, but some do not always apply these skills accurately. Pupils enjoy learning and want to do well. They talk enthusiastically about growing bulbs and watch with awe as the leaves and flowers unfold. However, one or two explained that the white hyacinths would not smell because they were not coloured. This erroneous assumption suggests that pupils do not always think about their learning carefully enough to reason their answers. Similarly, children in the early years, measuring water with various shaped containers, could not explain why their water was pink and glittery and whether it was the same as the water they normally see. One boy explained that 'The teacher gave it to us and it is magic water.' None considered that their teachers may have added colour and glitter to make this 'magic' water. While feeding their imagination well, the activity did not extend their understanding of scientific fact. The most able learners make consistently strong progress because they have the capacity to think and apply previous learning when tackling new problems. However, less confident learners accept what they are told, without question.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

All staff and governors take their duty of care responsibilities very seriously. Safeguarding arrangements are reviewed and revised regularly to ensure that they are fit for purpose. All pre-employment vetting is thoroughly examined before staff are cleared to work with pupils. The school's procedures for first aid training, risk assessments, site security and supervision of pupils, in all circumstances, are robust. All the required training is up to date. Governors check that everyone is fully versed in the school's procedures, should any concerns about a

child's health and safety arise. All staff know to take swift action if they have any concerns and to follow the school's procedures systematically. Teachers ensure that pupils know how to stay safe at all times, including outside school. They learn about the dangers posed by, for example, strangers that try and befriend them and pupils know that they must never go to anyone they do not know. Pupils learn about road safety, how to play safely with play equipment and what to do if they fall over. A few pupils explained that 'You should not run if there is a fire because you might trip and then everyone else might fall on you!'

Pupils know what constitutes bullying and say that bullying never happens in school because, 'Nobody is allowed to bully you; it is very nasty.' Pupils learn to treat others with kindness and respect. They learn from their teachers and other staff that they must behave sensibly and look after each other. They know to tell someone if they are ever worried or upset. Staff know that, occasionally, pupils experience particularly difficult issues in their lives. You know your children and their families well and form trusting relationships with parents and carers. You and your colleagues do everything to support pupils' social and emotional needs with sensitivity, referring to other agencies if necessary.

### **Inspection findings**

- Since the school's previous inspection, there have been some inconsistencies in pupils' performance from year to year. While pupils have continued to leave the school at the end of Year 2 close to, or above, the standard expected for their age, we agreed that the inconsistencies warranted examination. The school's data for the results of tests and assessment in 2018 is very positive for the proportion of pupils achieving the higher standard in reading and mathematics. However, a few pupils failed to make the progress they should have at the end of Year 2. I examined whether support for all pupils is effective in helping them make the progress they should against their starting points.
- Inspection evidence, including current school data, shows that all groups of pupils are making good progress. Work in pupils' books reflects consistently good teaching over time. Leaders check each pupil's progress closely and modify provision to plan for individual pupils' needs effectively. They identify pupils at risk of falling behind in their learning, and plan support to help them catch up. Pupils who join the school in the early years and stay throughout key stage 1 make at least good progress. Some who join the school partway through the year do not always achieve as well as they could due to gaps in their previous learning. This is particularly the case where pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities and who have sometimes missed too much schooling to catch up. Occasionally, pupils who are new to learning English also join the school partway through key stage 1. They receive highly effective support and thus make excellent progress. However, they do not always understand their new language well enough to complete work successfully.
- While the proportion of children attaining a good level of development at the end of the early years is in line with levels found nationally, the proportion achieving at greater depth is not increasing quickly. With this in mind, we agreed to examine whether children, particularly the most able, are challenged sufficiently in their learning. Children who joined the early years class this year entered with starting points typical for their age. Half are already working at a good level of development in all areas of learning, including number skills and phonics. Sometimes, children who find reading and writing activities particularly demanding do not select these readily when given free choice.

Expectations, generally, are high, but there is room to challenge the most able further.

- In the school's performance in 2018, pupil outcomes in reading and writing were not as high as their achievement in mathematics. Therefore, I examined the school's provision for these subjects. Both of these subjects are priorities in the school's improvement plans. The teaching of phonics is good. Teachers model accurate pronunciation for pupils to rehearse. Consequently, pupils gain a good grounding in phonics to support their reading and spelling. Teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to develop stamina to write at length and to apply their basic skills of grammar, punctuation and spelling accurately when they write independently. Pupils enjoy writing stories and poems, and know how to use correct punctuation. They enthuse about sessions where teachers talk to them about characters and plots of favourite books they read in school. Outcomes in reading and writing are improving rapidly this year, with an increasing number now working towards the higher standard in these subjects, as well as continuing to do so in mathematics. Teachers provide the less confident writers with extra word banks and sentence starters to help them progress more rapidly. Pupils enjoy exploring new vocabulary, using words that will make their writing more interesting. Occasionally, basic errors in spelling, grammar and punctuation detract from the overall quality of the work pupils produce. This is because they are not always reminded to check their finished work carefully.
- As outcomes in science have been no better than those found nationally at the end of Year 2 over the last two years, I considered what leaders are doing to increase the challenge in science. Pupils' workbooks show that pupils cover the curriculum for science as required. They do not, however, always have sufficient opportunities to apply what they already know about the world around them, to test their ideas and theories. They rely heavily on what teachers tell them. Pupils are not adept at using previous learning in science to reason their thinking. As a result, they do not have sufficient opportunity to design and devise their own investigations to test their predictions so that they might achieve higher outcomes. For example, pupils know that plants grow best in soil, but have not questioned why they are growing hyacinths in water; one pupil explained that 'it is a bulb, not a seed'. They know that frogs lay their eggs in water but have not asked why. Having studied life cycles of various creatures, one pupil explained that 'the Hungry Caterpillar just got fatter and fatter and then it popped so the butterfly hiding inside could get out.' Teachers do not always provide effective questioning to deepen pupils' understanding or sufficient opportunities for pupils to ask questions about their learning.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teaching challenges all pupils, in all subjects, and teachers have higher expectations of pupils, including the most able children in the early years
- pupils check their work and correct careless errors in their spelling, punctuation and grammar
- teachers encourage pupils to ask questions and develop their thinking and reasoning skills when solving problems or devising investigations in science (and other subjects), in order to become more confident independent learners.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools

commissioner and the director of children's services for the East Riding of Yorkshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Rajinder Harrison  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with you and all your staff, the chair and vice chair of the governing body and three other governors. I met with a representative from the local authority, with your phase and subject leaders and other staff with specific responsibilities. We discussed your evaluation of the school's effectiveness and I examined the evidence therein. I reviewed documentation relating to pupils' achievement, the school improvement plan, safeguarding checks and policies and procedures. I observed pupils around the school, including on the playground, in the dining hall and in classes. Together with you and on my own, I visited all classes and discussed these observations with you. I looked at pupils' workbooks, spoke to several pupils about their work and listened to some of them read. I took into account the views of the 50 pupils who responded to the online questionnaire from Ofsted and met with pupils to get their views of the school. I spoke with a number of parents at the start of the day to seek their views about the school. I also took into account the 48 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, the school's own survey of parents' views from earlier this year, and the 46 free-text messages submitted by parents to Ofsted. I also considered the 21 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.