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20 March 2019

Mrs Lisa Quelcuti  
Headteacher  
Tirlebrook Primary School  
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Dear Mrs Quelcuti

### **Short inspection of Tirlebrook Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 5 March 2019, 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 June 2015.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

You and your deputy headteacher lead the school with energy and vision. Staff and parents appreciate your commitment to promoting the achievement of pupils through a wide and motivating curriculum. Pupils are proud of the school and talk enthusiastically of opportunities to take part in challenging activities in sport, science and the arts. Parents value the community atmosphere fostered, for example, through events such as the whole school singing together in the 'iSingPOP' concert. A parent typically represented the views of most by saying, 'Tirlebrook is an absolutely lovely school with a great ethos of valuing individuality and each pupil's strengths, whatever they may be.' Since the previous inspection, you have developed the Nursery as part of the school. This is now established and contributing to the consistently high standards of achievement across early years.

Governors share your vision and your commitment to school improvement. However, leaders' evaluations of the school's work are not enabling governors to gain a full picture of what is going well and what still needs to improve. The school's self-evaluation does not identify where improvements need to be made. For example, there is no evaluation report on the impact of the pupil premium on the achievement of disadvantaged pupils. Therefore, the links between information gained through evaluation and the priorities in the school development plan are

tenuous. It is not clear how governors will check the progress of the improvement plan, particularly in relation to the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. As a result, the school's ability to drive improvement is weakened. The plan does, however, highlight that you have recognised the need to examine how you gather information about school performance.

At the time of the previous inspection, you were asked to develop middle leaders' skills in giving teachers feedback and guidance on their teaching. Middle leaders have taken a key role in staff development for English and mathematics. However, the checks made on teaching and the quality of pupils' work are not well planned. This restricts all leaders in their ability to drive improvement. The Ofsted staff survey indicated disquiet from a number of members of staff about a lack of feedback on their work from senior leaders. Some staff are unsure as to how judgements on the quality of teaching are reached. Consequently, not all staff fully understand leaders' expectations and some feel that they are not being supported to develop professionally.

The previous inspection identified a need to increase the rate at which pupils developed their mathematical understanding. In 2018, attainment in mathematics at the expected level was below that in reading and writing. This area for improvement formed a key line of enquiry for this inspection.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The school's safeguarding policies and procedures are fit for purpose. Staff have received effective training and swiftly communicate to leaders any concerns they have that pupils may be at risk of harm. Leaders raise concerns with outside agencies and persist in seeking a solution, which ensures that pupils are safe and families are supported. Appropriate checks are made on adults working with pupils and the records are well kept. Governors discuss safeguarding with leaders and reports are made to all governor meetings. The school undertakes risk assessments which prepare leaders well in dealing with the unexpected.

Pupils say that the school is a safe and friendly place to learn. Good teaching has given them an understanding of what constitutes bullying and they are sure that should it arise in school, it would be swiftly dealt with. Pupils are taught well about how to stay safe on the internet and how to follow the school's good routines in the event of a fire. Almost all parents interviewed or who responded to the Parent View survey believe that their children are safe in school. However, a number of parents felt that raising concerns with school leaders was difficult, including raising concerns about pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders take parents' concerns seriously, but do not record their responses and feedback to parents systematically enough.

### **Inspection findings**

- During this inspection, I reviewed the school's planned approach in guiding the most able pupils to reach the higher standards at the end of key stage 2. In

2018, the steps the school took to improve teaching and learning in reading meant that the proportion of pupils reaching the higher standard was above the national average. The proportion of pupils reaching greater depth in writing remained low.

- The school's approach to ensuring that work matches the needs of the most able pupils requires teachers to make ongoing checks within lessons and give pupils feedback and challenge where needed. This approach is in the early stages of implementation and is not yet consistently well used. During the inspection, in a few classes, the most able pupils were seen to finish work quickly and to wait while other pupils had work explained to them again.
- In addition to fewer pupils reaching greater depth in writing, recent standards at the end of key stage 2 have been below the national average in pupils' knowledge of grammar, punctuation and spelling. Consequently, my next line of enquiry was to examine how consistent and accurate pupils were in applying these skills in their writing. Pupils enjoy writing and teachers develop pupils' skills across a broad curriculum. Pupils write stories, biographies and poetry and recount events from school life. Teachers use learning from other subjects to provide the context for pupils' writing. When used well, this is particularly successful in sparking pupils' interest. This could be seen, for example, in the stories written in response to learning about the Ancient Greek civilisation.
- Teachers develop pupils' expressive and technical knowledge of writing towards a quality final outcome. A review of pupils' work showed that this approach is not yet used consistently well. Some writing is guided too closely and pupils' final pieces are too similar to show what skills they have acquired. Not all teachers balance the teaching of the content of pupils' writing with having high enough expectations of pupils' accuracy in writing. Consequently, pupils' work shows that they do not maintain the consistency of, for example, their basic punctuation across all their work. The quality of pupils' handwriting and presentation undermines their writing and is not consistently challenged by teachers. The standard of pupils' spelling is good and evidences how good teaching across the school is building on the strong phonic skills pupils gain in Reception and Year 1.
- My last line of enquiry was to review the teaching of problem-solving and reasoning in mathematics. This had been an area for improvement from the previous inspection. The teaching of mathematics has been developed effectively by taking note of latest guidance on best practice and on strong professional development. Pupils' work shows that the approach to teaching problem-solving is consistent and is developing pupils' interest and confidence in mathematics. Pupils told me that they particularly value being able to choose their own preferred methods of tackling calculations.
- When pupils are expected to explain their thinking and explain, for example, why an answer is right or wrong, they are less confident in doing so clearly. This could be seen in class visits and in pupils' books. On occasions, explanations are cursory or not couched in the correct mathematical terms. Teachers do not guide pupils sufficiently well in how to improve this aspect of their mathematics. Equally, teachers do not encourage pupils to set their work out neatly and this inhibits pupils from reviewing their working to support their explanations.

## **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they develop and communicate a clear oversight of the school's work so that governors can hold them to account for bringing improvement, including in the use of the pupil premium
- lines of accountability are communicated clearly to all staff so they understand how the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning supports their professional development and pupils' achievement
- teachers improve pupils' achievement in mathematics by developing their ability to explain their mathematical thinking using accurate vocabulary
- consistently effective teaching of writing secures pupils' good achievement so that more pupils reach greater depth at the end of key stage 2
- teachers have high expectations of pupils' handwriting and presentation in all their work
- they communicate better with parents and record systematically their responses to any concerns that are shared with them.

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

Yours sincerely

Wendy Marriott  
**Ofsted Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with you and the deputy headteacher. Together, we visited classrooms to talk to pupils about their learning. I also made a visit to the Nursery to check welfare arrangements. I took account of the school's approach to assessment and reviewed samples of pupils' work in writing, mathematics, science and history. I held a meeting with a group of governors and a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. I scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and external reviews of the school's performance. I held discussions about safeguarding and reviewed the school's procedures. I met with a group of pupils to take account of their views of the school. I spoke to parents at the start of the school day and took account of the 87 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and the additional comments from parents. I considered the views of staff through the 19 responses to the online staff survey.