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Mrs Vikki Fenton
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Fenton

Short inspection of Swinton Fitzwilliam Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 9 April 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in February 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

You and your team are determined to provide highly effective education for all the pupils in your care. You provide your pupils with a wide range of different opportunities, many of which are designed to open their eyes to the world beyond school and raise their aspirations for the future.

You are very keen to continue to improve. You have identified areas for development and have put effective plans in place to address them. Every resource and strategy that is used in school is carefully chosen. Often, they are adapted and developed to more closely match the needs of your pupils, a process you fondly call 'Fitzwilliamising'.

You have empowered middle leaders to champion their subjects. They are well trained and have action plans which support them to make improvements to teaching and learning. They provide effective support and training for other staff. They write position statements for their subjects at set points throughout the year which are communicated to staff and governors.

Your love for reading is infectious. Books have a high profile in all areas of the school. Pupils of all ages are eager to talk about their favourite books and authors and regularly recommend them to their peers. The links the school has with a range

of different authors is effectively supporting both reading and writing.

Leaders have acted to develop the teaching of English grammar, punctuation and spelling. Training has been provided for staff to support them in developing a more in-depth subject knowledge. This has led to improvements in planning and assessment, which have made lessons more engaging for pupils. School data and work in pupils' books show that current pupils in all year groups make good progress. The proportions of pupils achieving the expected and higher standards in Year 6 have been above the national averages for two years.

Leaders have also acted to embed the improvements they have made to the teaching of writing across the school. Teachers use quality model texts effectively to inspire and support pupils to write for a range of different purposes. As a result, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standards in writing in Year 2 and 6 has been above the national average for two years. The proportion reaching the higher standard in Year 6 in 2018 was also above the national average.

Behaviour is good. Work has been done to further reduce the very few interruptions to learning caused by poor behaviour. Leaders ensure that the school's behaviour policy is consistently applied. Pupils, parents and staff agree that most pupils consistently show positive attitudes towards their learning and are very well behaved in lessons.

Members of the local governing body are very knowledgeable about the strengths of the school and the work that leaders are doing to address the areas for improvement they have identified. They act as true critical friends, providing an appropriate balance of support and challenge.

Pupils are very proud of their school. They especially appreciate the way that their lessons are enriched by special events, visits and visitors which are often used to introduce new topics. When asked how their school could improve, the only suggestions they made were to have a library and a longer 'daily mile'.

The majority of parents are very supportive of everything the school does. Many praise the school for the hard work staff do to support their children. One parent summed up the views of many by saying, 'Children take part in exciting lessons which they love telling us about at home.' However, parents disagree about homework. Some think that pupils get far too much homework, while others think the amount is right but it is not challenging or varied enough. Overall, pupils receive appropriate homework for their age.

Staff value the opportunities for professional development that the school provides. The least-experienced teachers in school were especially keen to explain to me how well they are supported by more-experienced staff.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have made sure that all safeguarding policies and procedures are fit for purpose. Staff are well trained and are given regular updates. They fully understand their duty to report any concerns they may have and do so with confidence. Records show that all concerns are followed up in a timely manner. External agencies are involved at an early stage when this is appropriate. Your safeguarding team use their collective knowledge of pupils and their families well to provide ongoing support for vulnerable pupils. Consequently, there is a strong culture of safeguarding across the school.

Pupils say they feel safe in school and are confident that they can approach any adult in school if they ever feel that they need support. They say that although concerns are rare, they know that adults will listen and act accordingly. Pupils display a broad understanding of how to keep themselves safe. They spoke knowledgeably about how to keep themselves safe in lots of different situations including when using the internet, crossing the road or riding their bikes.

Most parents who made their views known said that they know their children are safe and well looked after in school. A group of parents were very keen to tell me that you are 'like a mother with all the children'.

Inspection findings

- Phonics is taught in a systematic way which is ensuring that most pupils learn early reading skills quickly. Books are well matched to pupils' developing phonics knowledge. Pupils have lots of opportunities to apply their knowledge in writing. Work that is being done with lower-attaining pupils is very effective. For example, on the day of the inspection, a small group of pupils did some work on the trigraph 'air', before the whole-class phonics lesson. This enabled these pupils to fully take part in the whole-class lesson and contributed to their confidence and self-esteem. The proportion of pupils reaching the required standard in phonics in Year 1 has been above the national average for two years. The vast majority who do not reach this standard in Year 1 are supported to quickly catch up in Year 2.
- Leaders have acted in response to a dip in attainment at key stage 1 and progress across key stage 2 in mathematics in 2018. The school's approach to teaching mathematics has been carefully considered. The use of apparatus and pictures to secure pupils' understanding of key concepts before they move on to abstract methods has been effective. Therefore, this has been retained. Leaders have introduced a short 'show what you know' test before the start of each unit of work. These tests are carefully analysed to inform teachers' planning and to identify pupils for catch-up work before the start of the new unit of work. Teachers are also giving pupils more opportunities to develop fluency, reasoning and problem-solving skills in all areas of mathematics. Work in books shows that pupils are making good progress in this subject.
- Leaders know that attainment of disadvantaged pupils in reading, writing and mathematics has been below that of other pupils nationally for two years. Senior leaders are making effective use of a recent review of the school's pupil premium strategy to further improve provision for these pupils. Leaders at all levels are

now much more aware of the impact of support and interventions for these pupils. Regular monitoring is making sure that refinements to provision are effective. In-school data and work in pupils' books show that disadvantaged pupils who do not also have special educational needs and/or disabilities are making as much progress as, and sometimes more than, non-disadvantaged pupils.

- The proportion of pupils achieving the higher standard in Year 6 in reading, writing, English grammar, punctuation and spelling and mathematics was above the national average in 2018. Work in pupils' books shows that the most able pupils are effectively challenged by demanding tasks to make sure that they make good progress.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. Pupils have opportunities to develop knowledge in a wide range of subjects. Topics are introduced in exciting ways which inspire pupils to learn. Pupils are encouraged to make links between different subjects and aspects of their learning. Pupils have opportunities to apply and practise their English and mathematics skills in a wide range of subjects. Work in science is well designed to ensure that pupils build on their scientific knowledge, skills and understanding, year on year. However, work in many other subjects is not as well structured. For example, pupils study a range of different history topics but work is not always helping them to become better historians.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- developments to the curriculum continue in subjects other than English, mathematics and science, so that pupils develop and build on subject-specific skills and understanding, year on year, which they can apply in different contexts
- improvements to the teaching of mathematics result in an even-greater proportion of pupils reaching and exceeding the expected standard at the end of key stage 1 and 2.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Rotherham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Chris Cook
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I made visits to all classes with you. I looked at work in pupils' books with senior and middle leaders. I met with other leaders to discuss safeguarding. I met with three governors and a representative from the multi-academy trust.

I talked with several parents as they dropped their children off at the start of the school day. I also took account of the 32 responses from parents to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and one letter from a parent.

I talked informally with pupils in lessons, met formally with a group of pupils and listened to several pupils read. I also met with a group of staff.

I scrutinised a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation document, the school improvement plan, minutes of governing body meetings, school assessment information, and attendance and safeguarding documentation.