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Mrs Robbie Houghton and Mrs Juliette Branch
Deputy Headteachers
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Dear Mrs Houghton and Mrs Branch

Short inspection of Freethorpe Community Primary and Nursery School

Following my visit to the school on 9 May 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 January 2016.

This school continues to be good.

You and the leadership team have maintained the good quality of education in the school. Since the previous inspection there has been some turbulence in leadership at the school. Despite this, leaders and staff have taken effective action to address the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection report. By the end of key stage 2, pupils continue to make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics while experiencing a broad and balanced curriculum.

You have provided consistency throughout this period of change. Leaders have worked hard to ensure that the school continues to improve its curriculum and the quality of teaching.

In partnership with the staff, you have developed a welcoming school that is highly inclusive. Pupils enjoy coming to school and attend regularly. One example of the inclusive nature of the school is the carefully thought-out provision for those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Good leadership in special educational needs ensures that pupils experience a curriculum that is matched to their specific needs. Teachers and support staff work closely with the special educational needs coordinator to ensure that effective learning takes place and challenging targets are set. Another example of the inclusivity of the school is the way you successfully integrate pupils who transfer in from other schools.

Following the previous inspection, leaders were asked to ensure that most-able pupils are challenged further in subjects other than in English and mathematics. Leaders and

staff have addressed this area for improvement well and their actions are having a positive impact throughout the school. In particular, the curriculum has been designed effectively to provide high levels of challenge in subject areas such as science, music, physical education and art. For example, in music a range of performance opportunities are provided to develop the quality of pupils' instrumental skills. In art, pupils are supported and encouraged to produce work that will be displayed in the community.

Staff build strong relationships with pupils and parents, which contributes to the positive atmosphere around school. Parents and carers who made their views known are generally supportive of the school with 100% of parents who completed the Parent View questionnaire recommending the school. One parent whose child had transferred into the school recently commented how she was surprised that, 'Staff bend over backwards to help you with your concerns.'

The new governing body was formed in January 2019 at the time Freethorpe School was joining a federation of three schools. Since joining, the governors have focused on the development of a vision for the federation, which has high expectations and a clear strategy for how it will benefit each school.

Teaching in the early years is strong. Planning is detailed and a range of purposeful activities are organised in both the Nursery and the Reception class. Children were observed to be engrossed in solving problems, using play equipment and taking part in mathematical activities. Relationships in these two classrooms are excellent and behaviour is good. The outdoor classroom is used well, for example when children plant and grow vegetables, which they subsequently harvest and eat in class.

The school introduced a new assessment system in September. It is not being used effectively enough to provide staff and parents with information about each pupil's level of performance and what they need to do to improve further.

Safeguarding is effective.

Pupils feel well cared for and secure. They told me that staff are always willing to listen to them if they have concerns. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and the new designated safeguarding lead has a clear plan to strengthen systems further. Staff and governors receive regular training so that their knowledge of good practice in safeguarding is kept up-to-date and they know what to do. Staff know that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and that there are clear procedures in place for them to share concerns that they may have about a pupil.

You have put in place effective arrangements to ensure that pupils know how to use the internet safely. The curriculum has been planned well to provide opportunities for pupils to develop their awareness of risks with regular visits from a range of organisations, such as the fire brigade, police and ambulance service, to teach them how to stay safe.

Safeguarding policies and procedures are fit for purpose. Systems for recruiting staff safely are all in order.

Inspection findings

- The inspection focused on a number of lines of enquiry. The first of these related to how well leaders are supporting most-able pupils to make good or better progress in key stage 2. Time spent in lessons, examination of current pupils' books, and discussions with teachers and pupils show that most-able pupils make good or better progress. You have put in place a range of effective strategies, such as: providing challenges at varying levels within lessons for pupils to choose from; supporting most-able pupils through extra interventions; and ensuring that teaching assistants provide additional help to all groups of pupils equally, irrespective of ability. In mathematics, you have increased opportunities for pupils to undergo problem-solving activities and brought in an external mathematics expert to lead extra sessions for most-able mathematicians. Consequently, this group of pupils are making better progress across key stage 2 than in the past.
- The second line of enquiry we followed looked at how effectively the curriculum is planned to support pupils to attain well in their reading by the end of key stage 1. You and the staff have had a positive effect on attainment in reading by implementing a number of strategies. Your teachers have improved the quality of group reading within the class by providing staff training in this area and have introduced a strong focus on improving the vocabulary of pupils. In class, we observed teachers using good subject knowledge to develop pupils' thinking about a range of texts.
- In one key stage 1 class, we observed some pupils developing their knowledge of expanded noun phrases such as 'golden hair'. Effective teaching helped pupils deepen their understanding of the grammar involved and challenged pupils to apply their knowledge to reading texts.
- In addition to developing the quality of the teaching of reading, your leaders have improved resources in the library. They introduced a range of strategies to help motivate pupils to read more at home and choose books that are suitable for their ability level. During the inspection, three Year 2 pupils, who I heard reading, told me how the school encourages them to choose challenging books.
- The third line of enquiry we identified was to check on the quality of support being given to disadvantaged pupils. This is a relatively small group of pupils but takes a high priority within the overall school culture of inclusivity. You set out individual plans for each pupil, taking into account their starting points and the different challenges that they have. Programmes of support focus equally on social and emotional needs as well as academic targets. Leaders hold teachers accountable for the progress of disadvantaged pupils through regular discussions and monitoring activities. Targeted academic support is given when needed both within the classroom and, on occasion, through extra sessions. Examination of pupils' books showed that this group of pupils are currently making equal progress to other pupils within the school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- systems for evaluating the strengths and areas of development within the school are strengthened to provide more useful information to school leaders and governors on how to continue to improve the school
- the new assessment system is used effectively by teachers and leaders to enable pupils to make the best possible progress in all areas.

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

Yours sincerely

Duncan Ramsey
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and the interim executive headteacher who had started at the beginning of the previous week. I also met with the chair of the governing body, two other governors, and a representative of the local authority. I observed pupils around school and in their classes. I spoke with a number of parents at the start of the school day and with different groups of pupils throughout the day, both in lessons and at breaktime. I took account of the 21 views expressed by parents through Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, the 21 free-text comments and the 18 responses to the staff survey. I heard three Year 2 pupils read and evaluated a range of school documentation, which included the school's self-evaluation of its overall effectiveness, the school development plan, safeguarding records and information about current pupils' achievement.