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Mrs Sarah-Jane Wright
Headteacher
Princethorpe Infant School
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Dear Mrs Wright

Short inspection of Princethorpe Infant School

Following my visit to the school on 16 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 it converted to become an academy in 2016.

This school continues to be good.

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

Under your determined leadership, supported by other leaders, you have secured significant improvements to the school since it became an academy. All of the staff responding to the survey said it had improved and that they were proud to be a member of the school.

Pupils reported that they felt safe and secure in school. Behaviour seen in lessons and around the school was of a consistently high standard.

Children's outcomes in early years, including in literacy and writing, have improved consistently over the last three years as a result of strong leadership and effective provision. Pupils' attainment at the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics compares favourably with national averages, especially for disadvantaged pupils.

When the academy opened, you had three key priorities for improvement, which were standards in mathematics, outcomes for boys and the wider curriculum. As a consequence of highly effective leadership in mathematics, standards for pupils at the end of Year 2 in 2018 were above average, including for most-able pupils and disadvantaged pupils. Standards for boys were above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics, and for most-able boys in reading and

mathematics. However, the proportions of pupils in 2018 working in greater depth in writing at the end of key stage 1 and achieving the expected standard in phonics in Year 1 were not as high as national averages.

You now have in place an extensive curriculum that gives pupils access to a wide range of subjects and extra-curricular experiences, such as forest school, from their first day in school.

The exceptionally high proportion of pupils identified with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) in Year 2 last year (almost half of the cohort) did significantly less well than other pupils in school and less well than other pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics. There has been a rising trend in the rate of persistent absence over the last three years so that it is now above average when compared to primary schools nationally.

Safeguarding is effective

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Safeguarding is regarded by leaders as a very high priority of the school, hence the seniority of those with designated responsibility. Leaders are well trained to carry out their duties effectively. They keep up to date with training and guidance and ensure that staff are equally well informed. Leaders know how they would respond to various safeguarding incidents that could occur, although referrals are rare. Records are kept securely and safely. Systems are being enhanced by the movement towards electronic record-keeping.

The school's policies and procedures are comprehensive and take account of the latest guidance from the Department for Education. Leaders are held stringently to account by the trust and governors.

Pupils spoken to knew how to keep themselves safe in a range of potentially risky situations, such as fire drills and when using the computer. Younger pupils knew not to give personal information to strangers. They reported that there is no bullying and that pupils are 'nice to each other'.

All of the very small number of parents and carers who responded to Parent View agreed that the school keeps their children safe and well looked after. All of those expressing a view agreed that the school makes sure that pupils are well behaved.

Inspection findings

- By establishing consistently good teaching, you have ensured that standards are rising throughout the school for current pupils. Children get off to a very good start in early years, where they make rapid progress from their low starting points. The proportion achieving a good level of development, including in literacy and numeracy, has increased significantly since 2016. The early years provision, both inside and outdoors, provides children with a rich experience in clearly designated curriculum areas, including geography, science and

technology. Literacy and numeracy are at the heart of all these experiences.

- The broad and balanced curriculum in key stage 1 enables pupils to make progress in reading and writing through their study of other subjects, including history. Pupils were able to speak and write in detail about the Great Fire of London and Florence Nightingale. Pupils write for a range of purposes and through different genres and styles, including diary entries, factual reports and storytelling. More pupils than previously, including the most able and boys, are working in greater depth in writing. Standards for girls, who did not do as well as boys in 2018 at the end of Year 2, are much improved in 2019. The proportion of pupils working at the expected standard in Year 1 in phonics is improving, although there are still a number who leave Year 2 working below the expected standard.
- Pupils have done particularly well in mathematics as a result of the teaching of mastery and problem-solving, which enables them to work in greater depth during investigations. Boys, in particular, relish the challenges in mathematics. Almost all of the boys spoken to said it was their favourite subject. Boys also engage well in their learning of other subjects, including reading and writing.
- The introduction of a rich vocabulary in the wider curriculum, supported by challenges set by teachers, trips and visits, has ensured that current disadvantaged pupils are doing well. In the most recent assessments in 2018, their standards in reading and writing were close to the national average and in mathematics they were above average. The pupil premium is used effectively to ensure that these pupils (who represent well over half of the pupil population) are continuing to do well. Leaders and governors evaluate the impact of funding closely. The tracking system used by leaders, and shared with staff, indicates clearly where pupils are making what the school regards as at least expected progress and where further support is needed. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils compares very favourably with the national average for all pupils.
- In 2018, just under half of the pupils in Years 1 and 2 were identified as eligible for SEND support. This is well above the national average and the school did not have sufficient resources to support all of the pupils identified. Those pupils identified with SEND did much less well than other pupils in school in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2. The trust's challenge adviser holds leaders to account through regular monitoring visits with a strong focus on SEND. The proportion of pupils identified has been significantly reduced to be just above the national average. Teachers are held to account for the outcomes of pupils with SEND through regular half-termly pupil progress meetings. Leaders' reporting and publishing of information about SEND provision are much improved. A minority of the very small number of parents responding to Parent View said they do not receive valuable information from school about their children's progress. Work seen in pupils' books shows that there is still some considerable variation in the rates of progress pupils with SEND are making in their writing. The current level of attendance is below average for the majority of pupils with SEND.
- Leaders are tackling absence and persistent absence with vigour through the work of the pastoral support team. Leaders know their families well. Specific

strategies have had an impact on some hard-to-reach families, including agreeing attendance plans with them. Some staff go the extra mile through home visits to get pupils to come to school. The school offers breakfast as an incentive for pupils to attend and arrive on time but take-up for this is low. There are rewards, including certificates and badges, for those with high or improved attendance. Where families have been fined for the non-attendance of their children, this has not led to improvements. Systems for following up first-day absence are rigorous. Until spring half-term this year, these actions were leading to an overall improved rate of attendance for all pupils. However, since February, a recent bout of illnesses among pupils has set this back and, consequently, the current rate of absence is above the national average. There has been a rising trend in persistent absence over three years.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils with SEND are making consistently good progress
- a higher proportion of pupils, including boys, are working at greater depth in writing by the end of Year 2
- a higher proportion of pupils achieve the expected standard in phonics by the end of Years 1 and 2
- the rate of persistent absence is reduced to be at least in line with the national average, including for pupils with SEND.

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

Yours sincerely

Mark Sims
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, other senior and middle leaders, and other members of the teaching staff. I also met with the vice-chair of the executive governance group, the trust's challenge adviser, the chief executive officer of the trust and the trust's school improvement director.

I carried out a learning walk of lessons jointly with you, which included scrutinising pupils' books and talking to pupils.

I observed pupils' behaviour around the school. I spoke to a group of pupils from Years 1 and 2.

I took account of 12 responses to the Parent View free-text service. I also reviewed seven responses to the Parent View survey and 17 responses to the staff survey. There were no responses to the pupil survey.

I scrutinised the school's self-evaluation, the school improvement plan, pupil performance information, behaviour information and school policy documents, as well as safeguarding and child protection records. I also checked the school's website.