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Mrs Amanda Crossland
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Crossland

Short inspection of Muskham Primary 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 December 2015.

This school continues to be good.

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

Your leadership is passionate and effective and you strive to provide high levels of care and quality of education for all pupils. Since appointment, you have accurately identified areas of provision that needed addressing and you set about tackling these by providing a clear, shared vision for improving outcomes for all pupils. Staff also subscribe to this vision, believing the school has improved because they have a common sense of direction and purpose. Most parents are highly supportive of the school and the improvements you have made. One commented, 'A lovely school. Well run with a well embedded ethos that supports children to develop in a fully rounded way.' Other parents, governors and the local authority recognise the positive impact your leadership has had on improving the school.

You, along with your committed team and supportive governing body, have made good progress in addressing the areas for improvement that were identified at the previous inspection. There have been considerable improvements in pupils' progress in writing and their achievements in spelling because staff now work in a more consistent way with the introduction of strategies to develop skills in English, punctuation, spelling and grammar. Middle leaders are beginning to have a more positive impact on the areas they coordinate. You have clearly identified pockets of highly effective teaching and have ensured that these skilled individuals are provided as models of excellent practice to support and develop others. A key strength of the teaching and non-teaching team is

the willingness to share good practice and to learn from each other. However, you recognise that there are still some inconsistencies in practice and, along with other more experienced staff, you are closely monitoring teaching and providing effective feedback to ensure that all teaching improves.

You and your staff provide a bright, stimulating and supportive environment for pupils to work in. In all the classrooms that I visited, pupils were polite and paid close attention. Teachers set high expectations and pupils are keen to live up to these. Pupil engagement is high because the curriculum is rich and engaging, with a focus on the wider curriculum and an understanding of what pupils are interested in. Pupils stated that they feel challenged. They also enjoy what they are doing, knowing that their teachers want the best for them. The 'Enablers' approach, where pupils are encouraged to empathise, question, persevere, and be optimistic, creative and independent, underpins the school's meaningful and connected curriculum.

Pupils behave well during lessons and play appropriately together at break and lunchtimes. Pupils look forward to the celebration assembly that takes place each week, where their achievements and good behaviour are recognised. They look after and care for each other. For example, one parent noted how wonderful the older pupils are in looking after the younger ones. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is well developed. Pupils spoke confidently of the school as an inclusive environment where all are valued and diversity celebrated. One pupil stated that: 'We learn to trust, help and adapt to each other really easily.'

Governors have an accurate view of the school, knowing what it does well and playing an important part in trying to improve it further. They have secured this understanding through regular monitoring and the detailed reports you provide them with. The governing body has a wide range of experience and expertise which allows them to provide leaders with informed challenge. The chair of the governing body is very influential in ensuring that the school's procedures for keeping children safe are fit for purpose.

Safeguarding is effective.

Procedures for keeping pupils safe are strong because leaders make it their highest priority. All staff and governors have received up-to-date training that is appropriate for their role. You and your staff, together with the governor with specific responsibility for safeguarding, are consistently robust when applying procedures that keep pupils safe. A strength of Muskhams Primary is the recognition that pupils can be best supported where families are supported too. Should a concern be identified, you respond promptly and ensure that actions are followed up tenaciously. Detailed records are kept and closely monitored. You work closely with outside agencies and your approach to safeguarding has been recognised as an example of good practice by the local authority. Staff, at all levels, understand and apply school procedures. Staff know what to look for to identify pupils who may be in need, and take actions to support them. Governors conduct regular audits of safeguarding procedures and associated policies.

Pupils say that they feel and are kept safe, and that they have adults they can talk to if

they are worried about anything. Pupils also say that bad behaviour or bullying is very rare but, should it occur, they trust the adults in school to deal with it fairly. The overwhelming majority of parents I spoke with, or who responded to the Ofsted Parent View survey, agree that their children are safe and happy in school. Nearly all parents consider their children to be well looked after. A number of parents also commented positively about how you understand their children and their circumstances, and have tailored your approach to support them.

Inspection findings

- I followed a number of lines of enquiry in deciding whether the school remained good. The previous inspection report noted that there were inconsistencies in the quality of teaching across school. There has been great progress towards addressing this issue, with improved provision in the early years, more secure teaching of phonics and consistently uniform approaches to the teaching of key skills and concepts in writing and mathematics across school. Assessment procedures are more accurate and allow staff to plan to meet individual pupils' needs.
- Due to your determination to provide excellence, some actions are still being refined. You have a continuing priority to ensure that best practice is shared across all classes. To this end you utilise the skills and expertise of your most effective teachers in supporting others and developing them professionally.
- You have accessed support from external partners to introduce new and innovative teaching methods. The training you have provided for staff has been well considered and appropriate to their current competencies.
- Your most recent evaluation of teaching is accurate. The quality of teaching is monitored effectively and provides very clear pointers for teachers to improve their practice. These actions are followed up at regular intervals so that teaching is increasingly effective. However, there are some areas where teaching has less impact in precisely meeting pupils' needs.
- I also considered how effectively senior leaders have been in developing less experienced subject leaders so that they can carry out their role in improving school performance. You have provided these leaders with very clear expectations about what constitutes effective subject leadership.
- Middle leaders have worked with subject leaders from other schools to develop good practice and have also been provided with effective professional development. Leaders for English and Mathematics now have a good understanding of their subject areas and are sufficiently skilled and experienced to support or challenge less experienced colleagues. These leaders monitor their subjects through lesson observations, work scrutiny and data analysis. They speak knowledgeably about improvement priorities in their subjects. Indeed, outcomes in the core subjects at the end of 2016, 2017 and 2018 in all key stages were above the national averages for attainment at both the expected and higher levels. Attainment in the Year 1 phonics screening check has been consistently above the national average too. These outcomes are a result of your determination to provide the best for all pupils through improved teaching and increasingly effective subject leadership. However, you recognise that the impact of middle leaders is still yet to be fully realised.

- Finally, I investigated whether actions, identified by leaders to bring about sustained improvements in the core subjects for all pupils, were precise enough. I concluded that leaders have an accurate view of strengths and understand where more needs to be done.
- The school's improvement plan focuses on the core priorities of further embedding best practice in the quality of teaching in the core subjects, particularly in reading and writing, and maximising the impact of leaders. These priorities are appropriate given that you are determined to ensure that progress follows a more consistently improving trend. While progress at the end of key stage 2 in 2017 was in the top 20% of all schools nationally in reading, writing and mathematics, it dropped to around the national average in 2018. It is these fluctuations that you are intending to address. The introduction of new strategies in the teaching of writing and the 'Switch-On Reading' approach already appear to be having a positive impact on pupils' progress in these subjects.
- We discussed how your plans could be further enhanced to make sure they have the maximum desired impact. Some actions, included in your plans, lack sufficient clarity and are not always clearly understood by all staff. This is preventing some staff from accurately focusing on some specific groups. The work scrutiny I conducted also indicated that some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities were not making progress as rapidly as they should.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the school improvement plan is sufficiently precise and understood by all staff so as to clearly identify specific actions that maximise attainment and accelerate progress for all pupils
- they continue to further accelerate the progress of learning for pupils, by:
 - consolidating the impact of middle leaders
 - ensuring that the needs of individual pupils are accurately addressed, especially for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

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

Yours sincerely

Gerard Philbin
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection I met with you and senior leaders and shared my lines of enquiry. I met with members of the governing body and subject leaders for English and mathematics. I held discussions with other school staff and school business managers along with a number of parents. I considered responses from parents to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and all free-text comments, along with the school's own surveys. I also scrutinised staff responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire. We visited classes across the school together and looked at a sample of pupils' work across all key stages. I studied a range of documents, including leaders' evaluation of the school's current performance and how you are planning for improvement. I took into account a number of key documents, including those for safeguarding and for pupil premium spending. I investigated how the school monitors pupils' absence, the single central record and whether procedures for the recruitment of staff meet current statutory requirements.