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Mrs Anita Gutteridge
Headteacher
Hillside Avenue Primary and Nursery School, Thorpe
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Dear Mrs Gutteridge

Short inspection of Hillside Avenue Primary and Nursery School, Thorpe

Following my visit to the school on 12 June 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 April 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.**

Since the predecessor school was inspected, you and your staff team have maintained a school where pupils and staff work together happily, and a harmonious atmosphere exists around the school. Pupils and staff all aspire to fulfil the Hillside motto that 'everyone will grow to be the best they can be'.

By the end of Year 6 the majority of pupils achieve well in writing and mathematics, and especially well in reading. The improvements you have made to the teaching of phonics have resulted in almost every pupil reaching the expected standard in reading by the end of Year 1 and so pupils get off to a good start with reading. Pupils continue to be very enthusiastic about reading and to achieve well as they move through the school because of the high priority you and all staff place on reading.

More pupils at the end of Year 6 now achieve the higher standard in reading and mathematics than was the case previously. This was an area for improvement identified in the predecessor school's inspection. You provide greater challenge for pupils in lessons and encourage pupils to challenge themselves. However, fewer pupils reach the higher standard in writing than is the case nationally.

Governors and trustees work together well to support the school. Trustees provide support through advisers who visit regularly and through consultants from other external sources. This has been effective in developing the role of some middle leaders, although this is still work in progress. Governors and trustees provide a judicious balance of support and challenge for you and other leaders, questioning you about, for example, budget decisions to ensure that these are well thought through.

Teachers establish good relationships with pupils and plan lessons which pupils said they enjoy. 'Teachers really make learning fun at our school,' commented one pupil. Teachers have high expectations of pupils, both in terms of the work pupils produce and of their behaviour and attitudes. Consequently, pupils behave well in lessons and are keen to learn. They are polite and respectful towards adults and each other. They recognise that everyone is different and told me that this is a school where it is 'fine to be different because we all get along'. Some pupils, however, are not sure that the school's sanctions for misbehaviour are applied fairly. Additional adults support learning well, working in partnership with teachers to support learning.

Pupils enjoy a wide range of extra-curricular activities, such as sports clubs and computer club. A particular strength of the school is the wide-ranging music provision, which pupils told me they look forward to. Pupils learn languages such as Spanish and French. They enjoy opportunities to take responsibility as house captains and to work in their house groups on particular tasks. Pupils told me that this helps older and younger pupils to get to know each other and so contributes to the school's positive ethos.

Almost every parent who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, said that their child is happy in school and is making good progress. One parent's comment typified the views of many, 'Wonderful teachers, excellent lessons, my children are happy and have flourished.' However, some parents of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) were less satisfied with the support their child receives in school due to changes in the way support is provided, which some do not fully understand.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and other leaders responsible for safeguarding ensure that pupils are kept safe in school. You know pupils well and are quick to notice and respond to any signs that a child may be at risk. However, your systems for recording concerns do not reflect best practice. You are currently introducing an electronic system which will address this weakness. Staff training is effective and so staff know what to do if they are concerned about a child. For example, recent training in 'county lines' has helped you and staff to be alert to the signs that a child may be at risk and to work with other agencies effectively to address this.

Pupils told me that the school is a safe place and that there is always an adult to

Speak to if they are worried or concerned about anything. Pupils said that bullying is rare. However, some parents who responded to Parent View are not confident that the school deals effectively with bullying. You and other leaders have not done enough to inspire parents' trust in this aspect of provision.

Inspection findings

- The first area I looked at in detail was the effectiveness of support provided for disadvantaged pupils. This was because the progress made by the end of Year 6 by the small number of disadvantaged pupils has been lower than other pupils in the school, especially in writing and mathematics.
- You know each disadvantaged pupil well and identify their individual barriers to learning effectively. The support you provide is personalised and caters for pupils' emotional needs as well as academic needs. You provide, for example, counselling support as well as academic support for pupils' mathematics and literacy skills and space for pupils to do homework at school if they need it. I found that most disadvantaged pupils currently in the school are making progress in line with their peers, including in mathematics and some are making better progress than this.
- A small proportion of your pupils are absent too frequently, including some disadvantaged pupils. Consequently, these pupils are not benefiting from the school's support and some disadvantaged pupils are not making the progress they are capable of making.
- I looked closely at the progress that girls are making in mathematics because previous published assessment information showed that by the end of Year 6 girls do not make the same strong progress made by boys in the school.
- I spoke with a number of girls and boys about their attitudes to mathematics and whether they were confident mathematicians. Most pupils, both girls and boys, said that they like mathematics but many girls spoken to were not confident that they are 'good at' mathematics. This was not the case with boys. I met with a group of Year 5 girls. A number of these girls also lacked confidence in mathematics, especially when tackling more challenging problems, even when they knew how to do them.
- I looked at pupils' mathematics books and found that some girls rarely chose the greater challenges offered to them in mathematics, and this has not been addressed by teachers. I also found that teachers do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to develop their reasoning skills in mathematics. Often mathematics teaching is heavily focused on practising the type of questions pupils will encounter in end-of-year tests, rather than deepening their understanding of mathematical concepts.
- I spoke with the mathematics leader, who is new in post, who is beginning to develop her knowledge of what is working well in mathematics in the school. She has looked at some aspects of teaching and learning, such as the use of resources and mathematics displays in classes. However, she has yet to acquire a thorough knowledge of where pupils' progress in mathematics is strongest and where more support is needed.

- Finally, I looked at the progress that pupils are making across the wider curriculum. I found that leaders have made a good start in reviewing and revising the curriculum provided for pupils. Leaders know what they want to teach and why. They have ensured that all the requirements of the national curriculum are covered and are putting together plans to ensure that pupils acquire knowledge progressively as they move through the school. This is most evident in science where careful thought has been given to the progression of knowledge and skills. It is less well advanced in subjects such as geography.
- Leaders are providing increasing opportunities for staff to compare pupils' work, for example in science, so there is a developing shared understanding of achievement. However, they are not yet able to judge pupils' progress securely because the curriculum plans are not finalised and fully implemented.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- new systems for recording concerns about pupils are implemented swiftly and rigorously
- strategies to resolve bullying inspire the confidence of parents
- leaders improve the attendance of those disadvantaged pupils who are absent too often, so that their progress improves
- staff continue to develop the curriculum so that there is progression in learning in all subjects as pupils move through the school
- middle leaders develop their roles so that they are better able to improve the quality of teaching and learning in the subject for which they are responsible
- the curriculum includes more opportunities for reasoning about mathematics
- leaders analyse the reasons for some girls' lack of confidence in mathematics and take effective action so that girls make the same strong progress as boys in the school.

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 Norfolk. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Maria Curry
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, with teachers, with three

governors, one of whom is also a trustee, and with the director of education for the academy trust. I met with a group of pupils from Years 4, 5 and 6 and a group of girls from Year 5. I scrutinised a range of documents, including information on pupils' progress, safeguarding, development planning and the school's self-evaluation. I visited most classes with leaders and evaluated pupils' work.