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Mrs Cleo Redmond
Principal
Thurnby Lodge Primary Academy
Dudley Avenue
Leicester
Leicestershire
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Dear Mrs Redmond

Short inspection of Thurnby Lodge Primary Academy

Following my visit to the school on 14 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in September 2012.

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 vice-principal lead a happy and inclusive school where pupils enjoy their lessons and get on well together. You have high aspirations for all pupils, a view that is shared by all staff, academy councillors and the vast majority of parents and carers.

Working with the Mead Trust, the school's academy council and with staff, you have correctly identified where you believe further improvements are required. These are detailed in the school development plan.

You and your leadership team continually seek ways to improve standards. You work closely with other schools in the Mead Educational Trust and also seek support and challenge from a national organisation which provides an annual quality assurance review of the school.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are very well supported. Seventeen pupils receive support in the specialist on-site unit for speech, language and communication. This provision caters for pupils from Leicester City and Leicestershire.

As principal, you have developed a model of distributed leadership. Middle leaders are clear about their roles and responsibilities and understand what they need to do

to bring about further improvement in the school. For example, the subject leaders for mathematics and religious education spoke enthusiastically to me about their successes and future plans for their respective subjects. This was borne out by the subject development plans that I looked at during the inspection.

You ensure that teaching is typically good. Pupils say lessons are interesting and challenging. I would agree. I saw, for instance, pupils in the early years developing their numeracy skills by buying items from a toy shop run by the teacher. I saw pupils in Year 1 writing a diary entry for a mermaid. Meanwhile, Year 5 pupils were ordering decimals and Year 6 pupils were tackling challenging mathematics problems collaboratively in small groups.

Staff feel valued and are proud to be part of Thurnby Lodge Primary Academy. They enjoy working at the school and appreciate the culture of openness and mutual support and trust that permeates the school. They are given time and resources to improve their own and others' professional practice, and they consider that their contributions to school improvement are recognised and worthy.

You promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well. You have adapted the curriculum to provide opportunities for pupils to explore other cultures, and to participate in a variety of experiences. For example, the introduction of regular 'celebration days' throughout the year has enthused pupils and made them more knowledgeable about aspects of different faiths.

Pupils enjoy coming to school, and they speak positively about their teachers and how they 'make lessons fun'. Relationships between staff and pupils are strong. Pupils report that they find it easy to ask for help, and they consider their teachers approachable and helpful. Pupils' behaviour is excellent. In all of the lessons that I observed, pupils displayed consistently exemplary attitudes to learning. They follow instructions quickly, work hard and are fully engaged in their learning.

Parents are very positive about the school. They believe that the school is well led, and they appreciate the 'friendly community feel' of the school and the 'caring and supportive staff'. They feel that staff listen to them and act on any concerns that they may have.

The academy council is committed to ensuring that all pupils receive a good education, and members visit the school regularly to see it in action or to receive updates from you or from middle leaders. The academy council is using this information in addition to published data to hold leaders to account.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your leadership team have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You ensure that all the necessary checks are in place before an adult starts working or volunteering at the school.

You and the school's other two designated safeguarding leads have created an

ethos where safeguarding is a priority for all staff. The three of you meet weekly to discuss vulnerable pupils and to ensure that these pupils' needs are being met. You use an online system for recording and tracking safeguarding issues. The records that I saw were well organised and of high quality.

Staff, parents and pupils know who they need to talk to if they have any concerns. Pupils report that they feel safe and well cared for. They say that incidents of bullying are rare but are confident that staff would act quickly should any occur.

Staff and most academy councillors are well trained in safeguarding. There are, however, some newer governors who have yet to complete the 'Prevent' duty training.

Inspection findings

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good throughout the school. Pupils enter school with skills that are typically below average, but, by the end of key stage 1, the proportion of pupils who attain at least the expected standard is at or above the national average. The proportion of pupils who attain a greater depth of understanding in reading, writing and mathematics is now above the national average.
- Pupils continue to perform well in key stage 2. Where progress is seen to be less strong for a particular group of pupils, leaders are aware and take steps to address the issue. For example, leaders have carried out recent work to improve provision and outcomes for the most able pupils in mathematics.
- The mathematics subject leader has monitored teaching and learning and provided developmental guidance for teachers. Pupils' reasoning skills have been developed through the introduction of an 'answer, prove, explain' approach to teaching, and the most able pupils are now presented with more challenging work that requires them to think deeper.
- Pupils' basic numeracy skills have been improved through the introduction of a times tables online programme that pupils regularly access.
- Higher order mathematics skills are now being better taught. This was borne out in both the lessons that I observed and my analysis of pupils' work in books. For example, one able group of Year 6 pupils were tasked with having to solve the following problem: 'If the weight of one match box containing 220 matches weighs 45g, how heavy is one match if the box weighs 12g?'
- Another focus of the inspection was to look at the school's provision for pupils' physical and mental wellbeing.
- Pupils' physical and emotional wellbeing is given a high priority, with staff committed to developing pupils' character traits that will equip them well for life. A 'Roots to Resilience' programme is used throughout the school to promote 'character muscles', such as perseverance, kindness and good manners. Pupils speak highly of this and enjoy being rewarded by staff when they are seen displaying these valued characteristics.
- Healthy eating is taught in science, as well as personal, social and health lessons.

A salad bar option has recently been added to pupils' lunchtime choices and lunchbox audits are periodically undertaken. These are used to promote understanding about healthy eating.

- Pupils' physical health has been improved through the introduction of a 'mile a day' challenge. Pupils appreciate the wide range of extra-curricular sports clubs and the adventurous activity-focused residential trips that the school organises.
- The Sports Premium Grant is used to fund sports coaches who model good practice to teachers. Teachers are then observed teaching and receive developmental feedback from the coaches, thus improving their own practice.
- A third focus of this inspection was to look at the curriculum.
- Leaders are in the process of adapting the curriculum to emphasise intent and creativity more, and to provide more enriched experiences for pupils. A new facility has been developed to cater for art, design and science teaching.
- Subject leaders are actively involved in promoting and developing the subjects for which they are responsible. Regular monitoring activities are carried out and the results of these activities are fed into subject-specific development plans as future actions.
- Cross-curricular topic work is presented in topic project folders, but coverage, presentation and progression are not always completed to the same standard as in pupils' core subject work. Leaders agreed with me that the curriculum offered to Year 6 pupils was narrower, with less content and depth than that seen in other year groups.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- strategies to ensure that the most able pupils achieve the higher standards in the core subjects at the end of key stage 2 are embedded and developed further
- the curriculum is further developed to ensure that standards are as equally high in the foundation subjects as they are in the core subjects.

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

Yours sincerely

John Savage
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection I held meetings with pupils, staff and academy councillors. I also met with the trust's director of primary schools.

I visited classrooms with the principal and observed pupils' learning. I looked at pupils' work in a sample of their books in a variety of subjects and year groups. I considered responses from Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and additional responses from staff and pupils. I scrutinised a range of school documents, including records relating to safeguarding, behaviour and policies. I also looked at information published on the school website.