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Mrs Mandi Dingwall
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Dingwall

Short inspection of Thomas A Becket Infant School

Following my visit to the school on 4 July 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 July 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Leaders have developed a caring, community-friendly school, where pupils are at the centre of all that they do. The school staff are a strong team. They are proud to be part of the school community and they are committed to continuing to improve teaching and learning for the pupils. The school benefits from effective governors and a supportive local authority adviser. All staff are highly reflective regarding their practice. This has led to them making recent changes to the way that they prepare pupils for their end-of-year transition to new classes and the junior school. Pupils are excited and confident regarding their futures and several pupils said that they are looking forward to going to the junior school.

Pupils are articulate and happy. They enjoy and appreciate school. One pupil expressed the views of many, saying, 'Our school is the best school in the world.' They know that teachers expect them to work hard but say that they 'put in the effort'. Pupils enjoy the challenges that staff give them in their lessons and recognise that they make progress in their learning. The school is inclusive and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well provided for, educationally, socially and emotionally. Pupils take their roles as members of the school TASC force seriously. They know that they are helping to formulate school rules and policies. They recognise that they make a difference to the quality of school life for everyone. Pupils are keen to keep the rules and earn stars in the recently revised behaviour policy. They behave well in class and play cooperatively at playtime. They say that they make friends easily. The pupils, staff and parents all

agree that there is no bullying in the school. Pupils value their teachers and trust them to swiftly resolve any issues that occur.

Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school; 100% of parents who replied to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, would recommend the school to others. This is a very large school, but parents say that it feels small and friendly despite its size. They say that school leaders know every child individually. Staff are easy to approach and talk to. Communication between school and home is effective. Most parents are satisfied with the information that they receive about their children's progress. However, a few parents would like to have this information more frequently and earlier in the school year. Parents appreciate the commitment of the whole staff in supporting their children's emotional development. The whole community recognises the contribution that this is making to the pupils' well-being and their ability to learn.

Alongside your three English leaders, you have introduced new approaches to teaching phonics and writing. These are successful, and pupils are making better progress than they have in the past. However, you recognise that not enough pupils write at the highest standard, as pupils are not being creative and imaginative enough in their writing. Pupils' vocabulary is not wide enough in their writing. Despite some progress this year in the quality of spelling, handwriting and presentation in books, many pupils do not spell well enough and have difficulties with pencil control.

In your previous inspection, you were asked to ensure that teachers always have the highest expectations of pupils' abilities and to develop reading opportunities by providing a greater range of texts. You have raised expectations through teachers' insistence that all pupils meet higher standards in their work. You have also modelled high-quality writing, showing pupils exemplar work by their peers and teachers. You have purchased a larger stock of more challenging books to stimulate the most able readers both in the classroom and for them to borrow from your attractive library.

Safeguarding is effective.

The school has a very strong culture of safeguarding. Pupils and parents recognise this, and everyone says the school is a safe place. All the relevant checks on staff working in the school are in place. Staff are fully trained in all aspects of safeguarding and are clear about what they need to do if they have any concerns about a child. Governors are knowledgeable and proactive, carefully monitoring the safeguarding systems and practices. They hold you and your staff to account for the safety and well-being of your pupils. Your records show that you have been tenacious in ensuring that pupils receive the help that they need from outside agencies, such as social services. E-safety is regularly taught, and the pupils understand what they have to do to keep themselves safe online. You give advice to parents through your newsletter and website and talk with parents individually if you find that pupils are accessing anything inappropriate online. You ensure that the community understands the importance of regular school attendance. You are

vigilant and monitor attendance closely. Consequently, pupils' attendance is above the national average for primary schools. You have also reduced the number of pupils who are reluctant to come to school and are persistently absent.

Inspection findings

- The focus of the inspection was on safeguarding, the school's work to improve phonics and writing, and your provision for disadvantaged pupils.
- English leaders have completely revised the phonics scheme, designing a bespoke programme that has successfully enabled pupils to learn more quickly, be more active in their learning, and hear and use sounds more frequently. This has resulted in more rapid movement through the early phonics phases, and swifter progress and improved outcomes for pupils at the end of the Reception. All staff recognise the importance of reading. Leaders say, 'Pupils are taught to read at school so they can continue to enjoy reading at home.' Many parents support home reading and their children have well-kept reading diaries showing that they read a wide range of books. Those who do not read at home are supported in school with regular reading sessions with senior staff and adult volunteers. Throughout the school pupils use their phonics knowledge effectively to help them decode words when they are reading. The most able pupils read very fluently. Books are carefully matched to pupils' abilities and enable them to make progress. Many older pupils enjoy the more challenging books that are available for them to read.
- The leadership team have developed writing. They have trained staff to use new approaches, such as encouraging pupils to talk before they write. Pupils know what they have to do to improve their writing. They make very effective use of the visual guidance they are given at the start of each piece of writing regarding the grammar and punctuation that they should use. This has had a positive impact on the quality of pupils' writing throughout the school. Pupils' books show that they make good progress in writing during the year. Teachers have high expectations of pupils, who rise to the challenge and want to learn. Even very young pupils use the guidance to check their work for themselves, and all pupils frequently edit and self-correct their writing. However, the visual guidance has focused primarily on grammar and punctuation and there is little emphasis or guidance on developing the creative aspects of writing or extending and improving pupils' vocabulary.
- In your caring and inclusive school, you are strongly committed to ensuring that disadvantaged pupils have an education that gives them the best opportunities for their future lives. Leaders have researched the best practice and a leaflet has been written by senior staff and shared with every teacher in the school. This has raised the profile of disadvantaged pupils and ensured that they are consistently reviewed and supported by their class teachers throughout the school. Parents and staff value and respect the excellent support that the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) has given to both disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND. She knows the pupils well, analyses their individual needs and has ensured that the pupil premium funding has been effectively used to provide appropriate support and additional teaching as needed. Good use has also been

made of volunteers to support reading. The reading dogs who visit the school have been particularly successful in encouraging pupils and increasing their enjoyment of reading. Due to the emphasis you have placed on disadvantaged pupils in all aspects of school practice, many are now making at least as good progress as all other pupils, and often better in reading and mathematics.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- continue to improve spelling, handwriting and presentation in pupils' books throughout the school
- provide pupils with the opportunities to be more creative and use a wider vocabulary in their writing.

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

Yours sincerely

Lesley Corbett
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, your assistant head, other members of your school staff, including three English leaders, members of the governing body, including the chair of governors, a representative from the local authority and a group of pupils. I also heard pupils from each year group read. We visited some classrooms in every year group together to observe teaching and learning and look at pupils' books. I considered 35 responses to the Ofsted staff questionnaire and 69 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. In addition, I examined 40 free-text comments from parents. A range of the school's documents were also taken into account, including leaders' self-evaluation and improvement planning, minutes of the governing body's meetings, and safeguarding checks, policies and procedures.