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17 July 2019

Mrs Debbie Cooksey
Headteacher
Thorpe Primary School
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Dear Mrs Cooksey

Short inspection of Thorpe Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 5 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 June 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Following the retirement of the previous headteacher and departure of the deputy headteacher, governors appointed you as headteacher in April 2016. You acted quickly and reviewed all areas of the school, correctly identifying and prioritising areas for improvement. Together with governors, you reviewed the school's leadership structure and promoted internally one member of staff to the position of assistant headteacher to join the other existing assistant headteacher. You reviewed and restructured the roles of all middle leaders, including leadership of individual subjects. As a result, leadership and management have been strengthened further and since the last inspection, outcomes of pupils have been strong, overall, with some variation from year to year.

Governance is an increasing strength of the school. A knowledgeable chair leads the governing body well and is the only remaining member since the last inspection. The new governors have a wide range of skills and expertise and are routinely involved in school life. They provide appropriate challenge and support to leaders and know the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Governors are proud of the school and are committed wholeheartedly to continuous improvement.

You and your leadership team have successfully dealt with the areas for improvement identified in the last inspection report. At the last inspection, you were asked to improve the quality of teaching by ensuring that the most able pupils have more opportunities to use and develop their writing skills and that spelling skills are taught well. You acted swiftly and focused strongly on further staff development and sharing good and

outstanding practice, not only within your school, but also through effective collaborations with other schools in the area. You reviewed the curriculum for writing and took robust actions to eradicate any weak teaching. You worked closely with the local authority to ensure that teacher assessments, at all key stages, are accurate. As a result, current school assessment information indicates an improvement in writing and spelling across all key stages and pupil groups and is evidence of the impact of your actions since the last inspection. All pupils, including the most able pupils, have more opportunities to use their writing skills in subjects like science and regularly check their own work and that of their peers.

At the last inspection, school leaders were also asked to improve leadership and management by ensuring that the role of middle leaders is developed further. Together with governors, you reviewed the senior and middle leadership structures of the school. You ensured that all middle leaders receive appropriate training on how to use assessment information to effectively monitor their areas of school performance. Staff value and support your determination to bring about improvements in teaching and learning and professional development. Your focus and determination have created a very strong culture of collaboration and a team ethos among your staff. You and your middle leaders regularly monitor the quality of teaching and have put in place effective monitoring systems and procedures to support further improvement. As a result, middle leaders in school are more confident and know the strengths and weaknesses of their areas well.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed. You and your staff know the pupils well and monitor pupils' welfare thoroughly. As a result, there is a strong safeguarding culture in the school.

Together with the school's business manager, you ensure that you carry out appropriate checks on the suitability of all staff who work with pupils. Your safeguarding governor evaluates all areas of safeguarding thoroughly. Staff and governors receive appropriate training in child protection, including the dangers of radicalisation and female genital mutilation. All staff are vigilant and know what to do if they have any concerns about the children and pupils in your school. The school shares information with external agencies effectively.

Pupils report that they feel safe in school, including online, and know who to go to if they have any concerns. Pupils, parents and carers particularly value the support they receive from the school's pastoral officer. Pupils also say that bullying is very rare and when it does happen, teachers deal with it effectively. Inspection evidence and the views of parents and staff also support this.

Inspection findings

- Since the last inspection and your appointment in 2016, you have strengthened further monitoring systems which show that the quality of teaching is good and better in most lessons. You have successfully widened the range of middle leaders involved in the frequent monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning, based on a carefully

planned schedule. Together, you check the impact of teaching on the progress of pupils. As a result, the vast majority of teachers provide appropriate challenge for all groups of pupils, including the most able and disadvantaged pupils, and use targeted questioning effectively to probe understanding and support pupils' progress. However, you agreed with me that some learning activities lack challenge and do not match the needs of the most able pupils and as a result more work is needed in this area.

- You and your leaders have made the teaching of phonics and reading a focus across the school. You make sure that pupils who struggle with their reading are identified early and are given the time and support to help them catch up. Teachers foster a love of reading. All pupils read daily in school and most pupils read frequently at home. Inspectors listened to pupils read with expression and confidence. School leaders make sure that there is a clear structure and sequence for the teaching of phonics. This enables pupils to learn how to decode words before they move on to develop greater fluency and comprehension. Pupils read a range of books that are appropriate for their age and ability. As a result, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standards in the Year 1 phonics screening check is improving year on year and, in 2018, it was in line with the national average. In 2018, the proportion of pupils at the end of key stage 1 who achieved the expected standard in reading was above average. In the same year, the proportion of pupils who achieved the higher standards at the end of Year 6 was also above average.
- You and your leaders, along with the teaching staff, have reviewed the school's curriculum. As a result, the teaching of writing and mathematics has been strengthened further. Pupils take ownership of their writing because teachers use a range of stimuli to excite and inspire them. Pupils stay focused and work hard on their activities. There are regular opportunities for pupils to practise their writing skills in extended pieces of writing, through planning, drafting and editing. Teachers use a wide range of resources very well to support pupils with their learning. The school's 'live marking' policy helps pupils correct any mistakes quickly and improve the standard of their work, including their spelling skills. Pupils in mathematics quickly move on to appropriate reasoning and problem-solving tasks and are confident in explaining their answers to complex questions. In science, pupils use their mathematical skills well in scientific investigations. As a result, in 2018, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 in writing and mathematics was above average. Similarly, the progress pupils make from their starting points in writing and mathematics through key stage 2 is strong and improving. The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in English grammar, punctuation and spelling by the end of Year 6 has been increasing year on year and is consistently above average. Inspection evidence and scrutiny of pupils' work confirm this.
- Over time, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics combined at the end of Year 6 has been in line with or above average. However, in 2018, a small number of pupils had a disproportionate negative impact on the proportion of pupils achieving these expected standards, which fell to below average. The proportion of pupils achieving the higher standards at the end of key stage 2 in reading, writing and mathematics combined, while increasing over the last three years, in 2018 remained below average. Inspection evidence, scrutiny of pupils' work and school assessment information indicates that the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics combined is

rapidly improving compared to last year. We agreed that this should continue to be a focus of school leaders' work.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- outcomes of pupils continue to improve by further increasing the proportion of pupils achieving the expected and higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics combined at the end of Year 6
- the good quality of teaching is refined further by ensuring that all teachers plan learning activities that match the needs of all groups of pupils, especially the most able pupils.

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

Yours sincerely

Dimitris Spiliotis
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, your acting deputy headteacher, middle leaders and governors. I also held telephone discussions with the strategic director from the local authority and the school improvement officer. I spoke to a range of staff, pupils and parents. I listened to pupils read and together, we conducted tours of the school and lessons, looking at pupils' work and observing their learning. I also, alongside you and your acting deputy headteacher, conducted a scrutiny of pupils' work in a range of subjects.

I scrutinised and evaluated a range of documents relating to safeguarding, behaviour, attendance, school improvement and school's own surveys of parent views. I took account of the 23 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including the 17 free-text responses from parents. I also took account of the 22 responses to the staff questionnaire and the 12 responses to the pupil questionnaire.