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Mrs Nicola Smith
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Smith

Short inspection of Firfield Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 23 November 2017, 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 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.

Pupils throughout the school make good progress. In particular, children make good progress in the Reception Year. Pupils also attain above average in the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1. Most pupils leave the school having attained above the national averages in reading, writing and mathematics. Their attainment in grammar, spelling and science are also above average. A few pupils, however, are capable of doing even better.

You provide the school with strong and steadfast leadership. You have taken effective action to remedy fluctuations in pupils' progress when they have arisen. You are committed to accelerating pupils' progress further where it is already good. Your senior leadership team provides you with valuable support. The staff share your ambition of achieving higher standards in the school. Morale in the school is high.

You check and record pupils' progress thoroughly. You measure pupils' outcomes against published performance information. This is used to identify clear priorities for the school improvement plan, which reflect the work that needs to take place.

The quality of teaching is good. Teachers have high expectations of pupils. They use pupils' assessment information well to identify and plan for pupils' needs in each lesson. Teachers set interesting tasks that engage pupils in their learning. They make valuable use of teaching resources to structure the activities they set. This helps pupils to understand their learning and provides them with challenge.

Pupils are keen learners who take pride in the work they produce. They work well together and enjoy being a part of their community. Pupils are happy, kind to each other and well behaved. The pupils I spoke with were articulate, confident and polite. Leaders provide pupils with a broad and balanced curriculum. Pupils told me that they enjoy all their lessons because the topics are interesting and teachers make them fun. Leaders also provide a good selection of extra activities. Pupils described activities such as a cooking club, performing plays, and learning to play musical instruments. Pupils also appreciate and enjoy the positions of responsibility they can hold in the school.

The governing body is a committed and knowledgeable group of individuals. They know the school and the pupils well. Governors are ambitious for the pupils. They have a clear understanding of where further improvements in pupils' progress and attainment are needed. Governors provide leaders with effective support and challenge to achieve the school's improvement goals.

At the last inspection, inspectors asked you to provide more opportunities for pupils to think harder and make more decisions for themselves. You have been successful in achieving this. Pupils are effectively engaged in their own learning. Teachers provide pupils with challenging work and make them think hard. Pupils use self-assessment procedures to identify what they need to learn next. You have also revisited your marking and feedback policy. Staff use this policy consistently.

You have had some success in accelerating middle-ability pupils' progress. You acknowledge, however, that the number of middle-ability pupils who reach higher standards in their learning is not as high as it should be. This is especially true for key stage 1 pupils. You also know that girls' progress in mathematics is not yet as rapid as for boys.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You have created a caring environment and a strong ethos of keeping children safe. Leaders make appropriate employment checks on all staff. You also make appropriate checks on visitors and volunteers. All adults are made aware of who the designated teachers are for child protection and safeguarding.

The school's safeguarding policies are comprehensive. Staff have a good knowledge of safeguarding practices and procedures. You and your assistant headteachers provide staff with all the relevant information they need to keep pupils safe. The governing body carries out its safeguarding responsibilities diligently. You have effective relationships with external agencies. This ensures that support is available

for any referrals that you need to make. Your records are detailed and well maintained.

Pupils feel safe in school. They told me that adults are always there to take care of them. They explained that they can talk to someone if they are worried and that the adults would understand. All parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, agreed that their children were safe.

Inspection findings

- In key stage 2, pupils attain similar standards to those seen nationally in reading. Pupils' progress in reading is good. Leaders know that this could be even better. They have identified that pupils do not develop their inference skills as well as other reading skills. Leaders have made some changes to improve this. For example, the resources that teachers use to support pupils' understanding and inference skills have been increased. Pupils have access to high-quality reading material. Teaching assistants provide pupils with high-quality support. Pupils currently in key stage 2 are making accelerated progress in reading.
- Guided reading sessions provide pupils with targeted activities that make them think harder about what they are reading. The pupils I listened to reading were confident and fluent. They told me that they enjoy reading and did so frequently. They too recognise that teachers are working with determination to improve their inference skills.
- The most able pupils also make good progress in reading in key stage 2. However, their progress was less rapid in 2017. Leaders have responded well to this. Their actions have ensured that the most able pupils currently in the school are now making faster progress.
- In key stage 2 mathematics, pupils' attainment is similar to the national average and they make good progress. Leaders identified that last year, pupils did not achieve as highly as pupils had in 2016. They have created more opportunities for pupils to solve problems. Pupils confidently explain their mathematics learning and show a good understanding of the skills they are developing. Pupils in some of the key stage 2 year groups are now making more rapid progress. However, this is not yet consistent in all year groups.
- Over the last 2 years, girls' progress in mathematics, in key stage 2, has been less rapid than for boys. Leaders have noted this trend. A focus on girls' mathematics learning is making a positive difference. Girls told me that they enjoy their mathematics lessons. They are fully engaged in the activities teachers set and are confident when they explain their mathematics work. The school's assessment records show that the proportion of girls who are achieving higher levels in mathematics is increasing. However, the girls are not yet keeping up with the boys in some year groups.
- In 2016, middle-ability pupils did not make as much progress as other pupils. Leaders quickly identified this and took action to remedy it for key stage 2 pupils. The approaches adopted have made some difference. In 2017, middle-ability pupils in key stage 2 made faster progress in reading and writing. Mathematics

progress, however, remained similar to the previous year. This is also now improving. Middle-ability pupils currently in the school are reaching higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics. You recognise, however, that the proportion of middle-ability pupils who reach a greater depth to their learning varies too much.

- A similar pattern for middle-ability pupils in key stage 1 has more recently become evident. This is especially true in writing and mathematics. Leaders have extended their teaching techniques into key stage 1. More middle-ability pupils, in Year 2, are now achieving higher standards. Although the proportion who achieve a greater depth in writing is still lower than middle-ability pupils achieve nationally.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- more middle-ability pupils make rapid progress and achieve a greater depth to their learning, especially in key stage 1
- girls' progress in mathematics is accelerated so that it at least matches that of the boys.

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

Yours sincerely

Vondra Mays
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you and your assistant headteachers. I also met with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors.

You and I made a series of visits to lessons. I spoke with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. I listened to pupils from Year 3 and Year 4 reading. I considered a range of documents. These included the school's self-evaluation, the school's improvement plan and information on pupils' attainment and progress. I looked at how effectively leaders and governors use the pupil premium funding. I also examined the school's website to confirm that it meets the requirements on the publication of specified information. Safeguarding practices were also reviewed. I considered the views of 64 parents posted on Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. This included 36 free-text responses and a phone call from a parent made directly to Ofsted. The 13 staff and 71 pupil responses to Ofsted's online surveys were also reviewed.