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Mr Ashley Parry  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Parry

### **Short inspection of Thornsett Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 7 March 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 November 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 have provided strong and steady leadership for the school. The school's aims of 'Achievement Creativity Enjoyment' are lived out throughout the school by both pupils and staff. Pupils enjoy school. They are happy and they value the support that teachers provide. Teachers work hard for each pupil. They know the individual pupils well and consider their needs sensitively. Parents are rightly proud of the school and praise your leadership and the staff for making the school a 'fantastic place' for children to learn.

You have acted upon the areas for improvement since the last inspection and made improvements to the quality of teaching, especially in mathematics which is now a strong feature of the school. The previous inspection identified the level of challenge in lessons and the effectiveness of subject leadership as key weaknesses. Teachers plan enjoyable and engaging learning opportunities for pupils by increasing the level of challenge. Pupils enjoy learning and work well with each other. Teachers are becoming more sophisticated in their support of the mixed-age classes; they provide more support for the least able pupils and are developing more opportunities to move the most able pupils on quickly in their learning. Your new role as executive headteacher of a nearby school has strengthened subject leadership, as teachers have benefited from more opportunities to share good practice and improve their subject knowledge.

Pupils' progress and attainment at key stages 1 and 2 across all subjects were above average from 2012 until 2016 when some pupils' outcomes were below average in reading and writing. You have correctly identified the key areas of weakness in pupils' reading and writing skills. Teachers are now providing pupils with a wider variety of opportunities to write in different styles and for different audiences. The accuracy of pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar is improving as a result of more focused lessons and increased opportunities for pupils to edit their work. Pupils' reading comprehension skills are improving across the school. This has been as a result of carefully tailored guided reading sessions. However, despite these improvements the opportunities for pupils of all abilities, and especially the most able, to work regularly at greater depth in reading and writing are limited. Teachers do not take enough opportunities to challenge pupils to think more deeply about their writing or their reading texts. The targets teachers set for pupils to improve their literacy work are not always challenging enough.

Pupils' attainment in science in 2016 was below average. You acknowledge that there had been weaknesses in the teaching of this subject previously. Science projects between local schools have inspired pupils' interest in the subject and teachers are planning more meaningful investigations and enquiry-based activities. Pupils enjoy the practical element of science. While current pupils in Year 6 are on track to achieve the expected standard, pupils' progress in this subject at key stage 2 is not tracked carefully enough. The new teacher in Years 4, 5 and 6 has devised a system to track pupils' progress but this has not been implemented fully.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

As headteacher and the designated safeguarding leader, you have developed a sound culture of safeguarding in the school. Adults in the school are properly trained to be vigilant for the signs of abuse. You are experienced in supporting pupils who have child protection needs and you subsequently elicit the necessary support for them. Your record-keeping is meticulous and informative. Teachers understand the systems to report allegations against adults. Governors monitor the safeguarding arrangements regularly.

Pupils have received a range of guidance and support, including a presentation from the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, to help them keep safe. Pupils spoken with have a good understanding of the dangers of using the internet, social media and online games.

Leaders have a good understanding of how to prevent radicalisation and extremism. Teachers promote British values well. Pupils are tolerant of differences and warmly welcome newcomers to the school. Pupils told me that there is no bullying. Parents, staff and behaviour records confirm this. Pupils feel safe in the school and they are well cared for. Parents praise the support and care that the staff provide for their children.

## Inspection findings

- Your self-evaluation is accurate. You correctly identify the key priorities for the school. The improvement plans contain sharp success criteria and appropriate activities to bring about rapid improvements. You have understood the need to work closely with other schools in the Peak Edge community and with the school with which you are now linked. The collaborative work carried out so far has been beneficial to the staff in improving their practice.
- The governing body is made up of skilled professionals, many with a background in education. Governors provide good challenge to you. They attend the school regularly for focused visits to confirm first-hand what leaders are telling them. This has led to governors having a realistic view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Governors receive detailed strategies from you year-on-year for the spending of pupil premium funding. However, their understanding of the impact of this spending on individual pupils is not as clear as it could be. Governors acknowledge that they would benefit from a sharper evaluation of how this money is spent to ensure good value for money.
- The vast majority of disadvantaged pupils are set to reach expected standards across the school in all subjects. Teachers consider their range of needs well in class and deploy effective additional adult support where necessary. However, the strategies to improve some pupils' attendance at school have not been as successful as intended. For these pupils, their poor attendance has had a detrimental effect on their progress.
- Most of the current pupils are making the progress they should in relation to their starting points in writing, reading and mathematics in both key stages 1 and 2. The vast majority are on track to achieve the expected standard. The proportion of pupils working at greater depth is still too low, although nearly all the most able pupils are set to attain the higher standard expected of them.
- Pupils' attainment in the phonics screening check was below average at the end of Year 1 and Year 2 in 2016. These outcomes had bucked the historical trend of the school attaining above-average standards year-on-year since 2012. Pupils newly arrived to the school mid-year from different settings with below-average reading skills had contributed to this dip in attainment. Pupils currently in key stage 1 are all set to reach the expected standard in phonics. Phonics teaching is effective. Pupils read confidently and decode unfamiliar words well using their phonic knowledge.
- Children in the early years make good progress from their different starting points. An above the national average proportion of children achieved a good level of development in 2016 and the majority of those currently on roll are set to reach or exceed these standards. Those children with developmental delays receive appropriate one-to-one support. The early years leader is skilled. She uses the mixed-age setting well to accelerate the most able children's progress. For example, some children work with Year 1 pupils on certain mathematics tasks.
- Your work to improve pupils' attendance and punctuality at school has had some positive impact but successes have not always been sustained. You recognise

that further work is needed to support families. Work with the educational welfare officer is ongoing and new strategies are in the early stages of implementation. The vast majority of pupils, however, attend school regularly and arrive punctually at school.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils are provided with more opportunities to work at greater depth in reading and writing to ensure that more pupils reach the higher standards
- the impact of pupil premium funding is more sharply evaluated to ensure value for money
- the system to monitor the progress of pupils in science is fully implemented
- strategies to improve the attendance of identified pupils are further developed.

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

Zarina Connolly  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I held interviews with you, three teachers and three governors. I spoke with pupils in both key stages 1 and 2, and I observed pupils' learning, including in the early years. I examined pupils' workbooks with you. I spoke with five parents. I evaluated a range of school documentation including: the school's self-evaluation, the school's action plans, pupils' performance information, attendance logs and other school policies and safeguarding records. I took account of the 29 responses from Parent View, 29 parental responses to Ofsted's online free text facility and six from members of staff to the online survey. The school's website complies with current government statutory guidance.

Inspection activities aimed to investigate the leaders' progress and effectiveness in relation to improving pupils' outcomes in reading, writing, science and phonics. Inspection trails also related to the achievement of disadvantaged pupils, including the effectiveness of the spending of the pupil premium funding. The effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements, governance, early years teaching and pupils' attendance were also evaluated.