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Ms Elizabeth Gray
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Dear Ms Gray

Short Inspection of Netherthorpe Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 14 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 June 2013.

This school continues to be good.

You and your colleagues have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. It is to your credit that you have achieved this despite the changes in staffing and leadership that have happened, and the continued large numbers of pupils joining and leaving the school during term time, often at an early stage of learning English.

The previous inspection highlighted strengths in teaching, leadership, pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to learning, and relationships with the community and parents. These aspects remain strong. Parents, pupils and staff are overwhelmingly positive in their praise of all aspects of the school's work. Staff are proud to be part of the school and enjoy working here. The culture of the school is very caring and calm, underpinned by strong and shared values.

Pupils feel secure and happy. Consequently, they are eager to attend and apply themselves to learning. Rates of attendance have risen since the last inspection, and are consistently at national averages. The proportions of pupils who are persistently absent from school are low. A perceptible buzz of excitement about learning, coupled with a strong work ethic, is tangible in all classes.

At the previous inspection, leaders were challenged to ensure that all teaching is at least good, and to improve achievement in mathematics in key stage 2. Since then, there have been a number of teachers who have left and joined the school. You have taken advantage of the good practice in local schools, and from within the

Sheaf Co-operative Learning Trust, to ensure effective professional development opportunities for all staff. This has helped to sustain levels of overall good and better teaching. Outcomes in mathematics have risen steadily at both key stages. In 2016, the proportions of Year 6 pupils reaching the expected standard and higher score in mathematics were in line with national averages. These outcomes represented good progress, given pupils' prior attainment at the end of key stage 1.

Staff feel well supported and challenged to make the school even better. They are positive about the many opportunities to share effective practice, plan lessons together and check the accuracy of each other's marking. You have been successful in emphasising to all staff their responsibilities in ensuring that all pupils, particularly those who attend continuously across the key stages, make at least good progress.

The school's information shows that pupils' outcomes at the end of the early years, and at the end of both key stages, are considerably influenced by the very large numbers of pupils joining and leaving the school during term time. In 2016, for example, 30 pupils left at the end of Year 6, but 83 had been members of the year group for various periods of time as it moved up through the school. Only 13 pupils had attended the school throughout key stages 1 and 2. Similar information is readily available for all classes in all years, including the early years.

Staff adapt well to meet individual pupils' very varied needs. As a result, children in the early years get off to a good start. The many children who are unable to speak English, and who have often limited command of their mother tongue, make friends quickly and rapidly improve their personal and social skills. The vast majority of children who attend both the Nursery and Reception years achieve a good level of development, and are ready for Year 1. Across key stage 1, many pupils achieve increasingly well. Those who attend the full key stage make overall good progress, from their starting points, many reaching standards that are approaching national averages, especially in mathematics. Outcomes in phonics have particularly improved since the last inspection, and are now average by the end of Year 1. Pupils who attend school for the full key stage 2 also make good progress. Many reach above-average standards in mathematics by the end of Year 6. Although reading and writing outcomes were not as strong as in mathematics in 2016, they are improving rapidly in school due to the good and better teaching.

Senior leaders share a clear understanding of how well the pupils are doing. Those from disadvantaged backgrounds generally achieve better than their peers, and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities largely achieve well. This is because of the regular and rigorous checks leaders make on how well pupils are progressing. You rightly identify that some pupils, including the most able, could be making more progress across key stages 1 and 2 in reading, and that there is still more work to be done to accelerate some pupils' progress in writing. Visits to lessons and work in pupils' books suggest that you and your staff are succeeding in making these necessary improvements.

Governors are committed and determined to see the school do even better. They have a good understanding of the strengths of the school and the areas to improve.

They provide a good blend of challenge and support and are not afraid to ask difficult questions of leaders. Governors are regular visitors to school. They are confident in providing reports for the full governing body, and its committees, about aspects of the school's work. Governors recognise that they need to ensure that a full review of the impact of 2015/16 sport and physical education premium funding and a strategic plan for the 2016/17 spending of pupil premium funding are published on the school's website. As a consequence, the school's website does not fully comply with the statutory requirements on what schools should publish on their website.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your leadership team have made sure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You have successfully created a culture of vigilance when it comes to keeping children safe. Parents are positive about the caring and compassionate climate that you have developed within school. Staff are encouraged to raise any concerns they may have about pupils, no matter what the issue. Staff have taken on board the key messages from the Department for Education's 'Keeping children safe in education' and the implications these have within school to make sure that children are kept safe. Staff know families and individual pupils very well indeed. Pupils say that they have every confidence that any worries they have will be listened to and dealt with. Detailed and thorough risk assessments are carried out prior to any trips and visits. Pupils' attendance levels are good and improving, and the rates of persistent absence are low. Assemblies and personal, social and health lessons are used well to teach pupils about keeping safe when online, being tolerant and respecting others. You and other school leaders work well with other agencies in order to keep children safe.

Staff are well trained in all aspects of safeguarding practice, including neglect and other abuse, domestic violence and radicalisation. Staff are clear about reporting concerns they may have and are confident that these will be acted upon by key leaders. Any concerns are carefully recorded and analysed. Designated professionals take timely and decisive actions. There are secure systems for checking and recording the suitability of adults to work in the school.

Inspection findings

- Senior and middle leaders have high expectations of staff and pupils. They are able to show through their own monitoring of teaching and learning that they have brought about further improvements. For example, in mathematics, effective steps have been taken to ensure that pupils regularly practise basic number skills, and use them in subjects other than mathematics. Many pupils are increasingly confident in applying the skills that they have learned to solve problems and in explaining how they have gone about this work. Pupils' abilities to match letters and sounds have also improved, and Year 1 phonics outcomes have risen to the national average.
- Children in the early years enjoy the many stimulating activities and experiences that encourage them to share, take turns, learn and play together. There is a

wealth of opportunities that enable children to develop well their communication and language skills, both inside and outside the classroom. Basic literacy and numeracy skills are also promoted well. As a result of good teaching, most children who attend continuously during the Nursery and Reception Years are ready for the demands of Year 1.

- Good class teaching and well-targeted support from teaching assistants ensure that most pupils achieve well across key stage 1. Those who attend the full key stage often achieve outcomes that are close to national averages, especially in mathematics, by the end of Year 2. You rightly recognise the need to accelerate a small proportion of pupils' progress in reading and writing, particularly those who join the school during the key stage.
- For most pupils who attend school throughout key stage 2, outcomes in mathematics are increasingly above average by the time they leave school, reflecting the good progress that they make. Outcomes in writing are also rising strongly, with many key stage 2 pupils achieving levels appropriate for their age. But you and your staff are not complacent. You rightly recognise the need to accelerate the progress of a small number of pupils, including the most able, in reading in all years. You are also keeping a close watch on the many pupils who come from disadvantaged backgrounds, and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, to ensure that they make consistently good progress in all subjects. You are making secure gains in all of these areas.
- Regular mental mathematics practice is enhancing pupils' confidence and agility in using the basic skills to calculate accurately. Many pupils can explain key mathematical concepts and the approaches they are taking to solve problems.
- Pupils are enthusiastic about writing. Many can write fluently, organise their ideas carefully, and compose sentences to good effect. A small proportion of pupils, particularly in key stage 1 and who join the school late in key stage 2, do not always have sufficient understanding of English to write clearly and accurately.
- Pupils are developing a love of reading. The pupils I listened to reading demonstrated good levels of fluency and understanding. They said how much they enjoyed the regular opportunities to read, both in school and at home. Nonetheless, information gathered during the inspection shows the need to continue to hone pupils' skills, across all years, in retrieving precise information and in making assumptions about character and story developments.
- Bespoke small-group work and individualised catch-up sessions are effective in helping particular pupils to improve their progress. They include pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, those from disadvantaged families, and the large numbers of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds who join the school during term time, and who are often at an early stage of learning English.
- Pupils demonstrate very positive attitudes to their learning. They are happy and enjoy coming to school. You and your staff emphasise that every day's attendance is important. As a result, attendance is rising and average. Absence and persistent absence of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds, and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, have fallen and are below the national averages for all pupils.

- Parents are positive in their praise for the school's leaders and staff. Parents believe that their children are well looked after in school and are safe. They acknowledge the good teaching, and are particularly pleased about the many opportunities for their children to become involved in sport, music, art, science and technology activities.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- a small number of pupils, including the most able, make even faster progress across all years, especially in reading
- a small proportion of pupils with limited understanding of English, particularly in key stage 1 and who join the school late in key stage 2, improve their range of vocabulary and expressions, accuracy in spelling, and use of basic grammar, to write more clearly and fluently
- the school's website complies with statutory requirements by including an evaluation of the impact of sport and physical education premium funding for the most recently completed academic year, and a strategic plan for the spending of pupil premium funding for the current academic year.

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

Yours sincerely

Andrew Swallow
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, your deputy headteacher, and other key leaders and managers. I also met with two governors. I held a telephone conversation with a local authority school improvement adviser. Together with you, I visited most classrooms to observe teaching and to look at pupils' work. I also listened to some Year 2 and Year 6 pupils read. Consideration was given to six free-text responses from parents, although there were insufficient responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents, Parent View, to enable further evaluation. Nonetheless, I took into account parent questionnaires (104) completed during the summer term 2016. I also evaluated the 37 pupils' responses and 15 staff responses to the online Ofsted questionnaires. In addition, I considered recent information in relation to pupils' progress, the school self-evaluation document, the school improvement plan and documentation about how you keep pupils safe. I also sampled some vulnerable children's case files.