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Mr John Cooper
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Dear Mr Cooper

Short inspection of Steeton Primary School

Following my visit to the school on the 6 June 2018, 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 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You and your senior team know your community well. You are unwavering in your search for ways to improve further the service you offer. You are resolute in your desire to improve. You are clear and realistic about the strengths of the school. You are also clear about what you need to do, working with staff, parents and governors to improve the school further.

You have identified reading as an area that needs further development. You have worked effectively to improve not only pupils' ability and accuracy in reading but also pupils' love of, and real pleasure in, reading. There is now much more reading of a range of fiction, non-fiction and poetry across the school. Pupils have noticed, and welcome, the relatively recent emphasis on improving reading in all its facets. The school's refurbished library is well stocked and regularly used by all classes in the school. In class, there are opportunities to read every day. Reading at home is encouraged through detailed and regular communication about reading between home and school. Initiatives such as FRED (families reading every day) help parents develop their skills as supporters of their children's reading. The links between reading and writing are carefully and explicitly made by the school's 'Read2write' approach. In these sessions, pupils develop their own writing skills through linking them to their reading skills. Staff give pupils opportunities to make the links between the sorts of literary devices 'real' writers use in their writing and the developing skills of pupils as writers. This approach is having a positive effect on pupils' writing and their skills in, and appreciation of, reading. Pupils told me that

they were very clear about the link between success as a reader and success overall.

You monitor the effect of this whole-school emphasis on reading, along with the other subjects of the curriculum, through regular, half-termly pupil-progress meetings. These meetings, which are often attended by governors, are forums for discussing the progress of individual pupils and establishing their next steps. Through this regular and focused approach, you and your team of staff gain keen insights into what needs to be done to improve individuals' and groups of pupils' performance and well-being.

Phonics skills are effectively taught from Reception onwards. Your staff, particularly in early years and key stage 1, are skilled teachers of reading. Staff underpin the teaching of letters and sounds with a rich diet of talk and exploration of the meaning and effect of words. The links between reading and writing are made early. I saw children in the Reception class writing simple sentences about what they had seen when they went outside in search of 'mini-beasts'. Staff were very skilled at talking with the children to help them engage with the 'facts' about insects and invertebrates. The children then recorded what they had seen in simple sentences on their clipboards. Staff engage closely with parents in the teaching of reading. Reading books go home regularly. However, despite the detailed work of Reception staff to provide child-specific reading exercises for parents to help them reinforce the phonics skills being learned, the school's reading scheme does not reinforce the whole-school approach to phonics. You are very aware of this and have already begun to address it. However, it is too early to assess the impact of this.

Middle leadership is a strongly developing and positive aspect of the school's work. The previous inspection report highlighted the need to develop this area of leadership. You, your senior team and governors have addressed this area for improvement very well. Middle leaders are well informed, energetic and clear-sighted about what needs to be done to improve the school further. They understand their roles in monitoring the effectiveness of teaching and then using the information they gather to focus and improve the practice of teachers and support staff. They work well together and with the governors and the senior team.

The previous inspection report also highlighted the need to improve outcomes in mathematics across the school. Again, working with others at the school and beyond, you have addressed this effectively. Not only is mathematics better and more imaginatively taught, pupils told me many times during the inspection how much they enjoyed mathematics and the challenges it posed them. They said that they enjoyed teasing out solutions to knotty problems. I saw examples of pupils taking real delight in playing with, and manipulating, number. Your staff showed real skill and knowledge in helping pupils develop their confidence and skill.

Pupils enjoy a generally rich and varied curriculum. The creative curriculum allows pupils to explore and learn from creative activities and experiences such as music

and art. The school has also developed a rich range of international opportunities that give pupils, via the internet, insights into other children's experience of education and life. This adds effectively to pupils' understanding of, and engagement with, other cultures and ways of being. The positive effect of this and other opportunities the school offers its pupils is clear. Pupils are increasingly mature and aware in their understanding of the variety and diversity of society across Britain and the world. Additionally, there is clear evidence from the books and folders scrutinised during this inspection that pupils, including the most able, have many opportunities to write at length and develop their ideas in English. However, the opportunities that writing can give pupils to explore ideas and deepen understanding are not so evident in other subjects of the curriculum, including in science and religious education. Pupils, particularly the most able, are not sufficiently aware of the distinctive knowledge, skills and understanding associated with particular subjects.

Overall attendance is now just above national averages. So, too, is the attendance of disadvantaged pupils. It is now similar to that of their peers. You have worked vigorously and effectively to address past weaker attendance. You have used a range of carefully targeted and sensitive, yet forthright, strategies to engage closely with both pupils and families who, for one reason or another, find regular attendance challenging. You are clear that there is still more to do and you have put in train a further series of carefully measured actions to support attendance. Pupils told me that they are very clear about the importance of regular attendance. This is because you have used a range of imaginative and effective strategies to help ensure that pupils understand its importance. These include regular inputs during assembly time and weekly updates and competitions that encourage attendance.

The governing body is ambitious for the school and the community it serves. It knows the school well. It combines strong strategic vision with detailed knowledge about the school's strengths and areas for further development. Governors gain keen insights into the effectiveness of the school through regular visits to the school and regular, focused contact with staff, pupils and parents. As a result of this, governors are able to hold leaders rigorously to account for the school's performance. They are well placed to help shape, monitor and assess the impact of leaders' actions. Governors' minutes and records are clear and helpful. They give a real sense of the school's purpose, effectiveness and ambition.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. The leadership team's safeguarding records are of a very high quality. These records are regularly updated, checked and meticulously kept.

There is a very strong culture of safeguarding across the school. This is because all adults at the school, including governors, take their responsibilities for keeping pupils safe very seriously. Your designated safeguarding leaders ensure that regular, up-to-date and effective training is provided for all staff and governors. As a result, all adults are very well versed in their safeguarding roles and

responsibilities. Governors ensure that safeguarding procedures and protocols are effective and in place through regular monitoring visits. They are well supported in this by Bradford local authority. You and your team have strong and effective links with outside agencies. The records of the school's dealings with these agencies are detailed. They show the school's very careful and determined approach to this aspect of its work with the community. The school follows up safeguarding issues tenaciously.

Inspection findings

- A significant proportion of children enter the school with experiences and language skills that are less developed than those normally expected for their age. Because of the interesting, safe and language-rich environment in the Reception class, all children settle well and quickly grow in confidence and social awareness. Highly skilled staff monitor each child's progress very carefully and use their shared observations to inform next steps in the child's learning and experience of school. The learning environment is interesting, engaging and safe. Children get on well with each other, taking turns and playing with a growing awareness of the needs of others. Relationships between adults and children are very good. Children feel cared for. Their needs are met. As a result of the staff's dedication and expertise, children's language develops well. They are well prepared for Year 1 because of their growing confidence and ability with language. They also move seamlessly into school because of the careful and detailed liaison activities undertaken by staff in both the Reception and the Year 1 classes. Links with parents are strong. Staff provide many and varied opportunities for parents to work with their children in school so that they can continue learning and play at home. The parents of Reception children that I spoke with were very happy with the service that this area of the school offers. Overall, the Reception class gets children off to a flying start at school.
- As they move up the school, pupils make generally good progress. Books and folders are generally very well presented. Pupils take pride in their work and want to do well. However, the scrutiny of pupils' books and folders also showed that overall expectations, particularly of the most able pupils, are not as high in lower key stage 2 as in the rest of the school. This was particularly evident in the variety and length of written tasks. For example, in some of the science books I scrutinised, the opportunities for pupils to write at length and develop their scientific knowledge and thinking were restricted. This was because the size of the boxes available on the worksheets in which they were asked to respond were too often too small. They seemed to suggest that a short, underdeveloped answer would do.
- Your pupils are very well behaved. They show strongly positive attitudes to school. They are inquisitive and want to learn. These attitudes are the result of the skill, enthusiasm and attention to detail of you and your staff. Key aspects of the school such as the encouraging of positive class room routines, the focused rewards system and, overall, a 'can-do' approach result in happy, active and engaged pupils. The pupils I spoke with were full of praise for the staff. They know that they can rely on them to teach, encourage and keep them safe. Pupils described to me the many opportunities they have to learn how to identify and

avoid dangerous situations, including when they are online. They were also very clear that they relished the chances they have to explore and celebrate the diversity of the school and the community it serves. They also saw, particularly those in upper key stage 2, how their experience and actions had an impact on the wider community and the world. They are confident, kind and aware of the needs of others. They are well prepared for their next steps.

- Staff are effective and morale is high. Staff told me that they feel very much part of the school's planning and success. They feel involved, highly regarded and their skills are acknowledged. They are keen to improve their skills. They work well and effectively together to share expertise. Classrooms are well managed and pupils are very clear about what is expected of them. Relationships between adults and pupils at the school are strong, relaxed and marked by high levels of mutual respect. As a result, pupils enjoy their learning and feel very much part of their own success.
- Teaching assistants are a strength of the school. They add significantly to Steeton's growing success. They have many opportunities to develop their skills and expertise. Their performance and further development are carefully and imaginatively managed by the deputy headteacher.
- Parents are very supportive of the school and of you. They are particularly pleased with the way that staff make themselves available. All of the parents who I spoke with, and who responded to the online questionnaires, were satisfied with the service the school offers. They were particularly complimentary about you and your staff. One parent described Steeton as 'amazing'. Another described their child's experience at school as being 'wonderful'. A number described parents' meetings as being very helpful.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- further encourage pupils' love of and expertise in reading by developing all staff as skilled teachers of reading and strengthening the links between speaking, reading and writing
- further develop the curriculum so that all pupils, particularly the most able, have more opportunities to extend their knowledge, skills and understanding in subjects beyond English, mathematics and science.

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

Mark Evans

Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I visited almost all classes during this short inspection. You or the head of school accompanied me in all of these visits. During the visits, I observed learning and, where appropriate, I spoke with pupils about their work and attitudes to school. I looked at a wide range of their books and folders to judge their progress and the quality of their presentation.

During the day, I spoke with you, the head of school, the deputy headteacher, the special educational needs coordinator, the teachers who lead on reading and safeguarding and four governors, one of whom was the chair. I also spoke with an officer from Bradford local authority on the telephone. I observed and spoke informally with pupils during the day and at break and lunchtime. I also spoke with parents as they brought their children to school and again when they arrived in the afternoon to take them home. I met more formally with a group of Year 5 pupils to discuss their attitudes to learning and their views of the school. I also listened to, and discussed, reading with four Year 3 pupils.

I took into account 26 text messages from parents and the views of the 29 parents who responded to Ofsted's online facility, Parent View. I read a range of documents about the school's safeguarding systems, the quality and effect of staff training, governors' work and the minutes of their actions, and the quality and effect of teaching.