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Mrs Louise Thorpe  
Executive Headteacher  
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Heanor  
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Dear Mrs Thorpe

### **Short inspection of Marlpool Infant School**

Following my visit to the school on 12 February 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 March 2015.

#### **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 the experienced assistant headteacher understand the school, and the needs of the pupils, very well. You have established an ambitious vision for the school, which is clearly set out in the well-defined plans for improvement.

You have successfully addressed the areas for improvement from the last inspection. Your renewed focus on teaching and learning has ensured that teachers have consistently high expectations for pupils. New approaches to the teaching of mathematics and writing have resulted in an increased proportion of pupils achieving at greater depth by the end of Year 2 in 2018.

Your work to improve pupils' speaking skills has been successful. Adults across the school support pupils' development of spoken language effectively, both through the activities provided and through the quality of adults' questioning and informal interactions with pupils. During the inspection, this was especially noted as a strength in the early years foundation stage.

The provision for outdoor learning in the early years has improved significantly. Despite the limitations of the layout of your school building, you have ensured that the activities provided promote children's learning and development very well. For example, the current theme of 'under the sea' is used imaginatively to harness children's interests and enable them to develop a wide range of skills and

knowledge across the areas of learning.

Relationships throughout the school are strong and pupils show positive attitudes to learning. In discussion, they told me that the teachers provide 'really fun work' which is 'just right' for their needs. Parents and carers are equally positive about the quality of education provided for their children. Typical comments from parents were, 'the school is a very welcoming and warm environment to learn' and 'there is a very positive feel to the school and I know I can approach any of the staff if I have any concerns'. All of the staff who responded to Ofsted's the online survey stated that they are proud to work at the school.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Pupils, parents and staff agree that the school is safe. In discussion, pupils told me that there is no bullying at the school. They could clearly explain what bullying is, saying, 'it has to be lots of times on purpose'. Pupils in Year 2 have produced an attractive leaflet entitled, 'Say NO to Bullying'. This includes helpful tips expressed in their own words, such as, 'in school respect one another' and 'Tell a teacher or adult in school. They always listen and want to help.'

Safeguarding training for staff and governors is up to date. Checks on staff's suitability to work with children are in line with statutory requirements.

You have strong systems in place for reporting and responding to any welfare concerns. Your records are thorough and there is strong partnership work with a range of agencies.

### **Inspection findings**

- During the inspection, I focused my attention on the teaching of reading, in view of a dip in outcomes at the expected standard, and at greater depth, in 2018. I observed the teaching of phonics and held meetings with you, the assistant headteacher and the member of staff responsible for phonics. I listened to a range of pupils read, from Years 1 and 2.
- The actions being taken in relation to the school's involvement in a national reading project are having a positive impact, as is the revised approach to the teaching of phonics. Your latest assessment information shows that an increased proportion of pupils is currently on track to attain at the expected standard, and at greater depth, in reading. The most-able pupils who read to me were confident and enthusiastic readers. Some pupils, however, were less confident in their reading. This was because the books provided were too demanding, with words that were too complex for pupils to read by applying phonic skills.
- During our tour of the school, we observed teaching and learning in both classes and considered pupils' workbooks in writing, topic and mathematics. We also visited the early years outdoor learning area. The work in pupils' books shows pupils' pride in their work and teachers' high expectations and attention to detail. When considering pupils' writing books, you explained that you are in the process

of clarifying your approach to target-setting. Currently, pupils do not have a precise knowledge of their targets in writing. This means that they are not always able to systematically and independently improve their work.

- Governance is strong. In my discussion with the chair of the governing body, she could provide clear evidence of how governors provide effective support and challenge for leaders, holding them to account for the school's performance. Governors have ensured that they have an appropriate range of skills at their disposal. They undergo regular training and fulfil their statutory duties effectively, including those relating to safeguarding.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers consistently provide reading material that is well matched to pupils' abilities, so that the less able readers can apply their phonic knowledge accurately and improve their confidence in reading
- writing targets are communicated to pupils, so that they have a precise understanding of how to improve their work.

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

Christine Watkins  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During this inspection, I held a series of meetings with you and the assistant headteacher. I met with the chair of the governing body. I held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. I met with the member of staff responsible for phonics and the school business officer. I held discussions with groups of pupils from Years 1 and 2 and listened to them read. I spoke with pupils informally around school and during lessons. I conducted a tour of the school with you and other leaders to observe pupils' learning in both classes. I examined pupils' work in their books. I considered the nine responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and the responses to the staff and pupil surveys. I examined a range of documents including those relating to safeguarding, the school's analysis of pupils' current achievement, leaders' monitoring records, minutes of meetings of the governing body, the school's self-evaluation summary and its plans for improvement.