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Mrs Judith Brock and Miss Gillian Dransfield
Co-headteachers
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Dear Mrs Brock and Miss Dransfield

Short inspection of Joseph Locke Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 12 March 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 previous inspection.

Joseph Locke Primary School is a happy, well-organised school. You and your leadership team are ambitious for your pupils. You have organised the leadership team well and each member of the team has clear roles and responsibilities. You and your leadership team have accurately identified what needs to be done to improve. You have detailed plans in place to make the necessary improvements to the school. You think carefully about your priorities and ensure that you focus your work on the most essential steps to move the school forwards. Your thoughtful and reflective approach allows you to think ahead and prepare other school leaders to do their jobs well. The staff team is committed to helping you to improve the school and there is a real sense of teamwork among colleagues. The school is a happy place for both staff and pupils. Staff invest time to sit with pupils during their lunchtimes and this helps to establish good relationships, develop pupils' conversational skills and improve the vocabulary that they use.

Leaders and other staff care deeply about the pupils. From the moment they start the school day to the moment they leave for home, pupils are encouraged to try their best. A large majority of parents and carers would recommend your school to other families. Parents say that their children are safe and well looked after. Pupils say that behaviour is good. You are working hard to change pupils' and parents' perceptions of bullying. Pupils say that, in the few instances when bullying has occurred, it has been dealt with swiftly and decisively. Pupils walk calmly and

sensibly around school and show good levels of independence. In classrooms, pupils listen carefully to instructions and are focused throughout lessons. They provide good support for one another and are keen to improve their work.

During your previous inspection, inspectors identified that teachers should challenge the way that some pupils present their work in order to improve its overall quality. You have worked hard and effectively to ensure that this improves. Pupils consistently apply the school's agreed approach to handwriting and join letters carefully. Pupils take a pride in what they do and set work out neatly, following the guidance you have given. Evidence of learning that is displayed around the school also demonstrates these high expectations. The school environment shows that pupils maintain a pride in their work when they are learning a broad range of subjects. For example, pupils showed great care when designing and making model cranes out of wood. The models they created were impressive.

Following the previous inspection, the school was asked to raise pupils' standards of attainment further by reducing inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. Inspectors asked teachers to provide pupils with work that matches their varying abilities more accurately. It was also recommended that teachers use assessment during lessons more effectively to help pupils take their learning to the next step. You have taken steps to put in place new approaches to the teaching of English and mathematics. Although standards of attainment by the end of Year 6 have improved, some of these approaches are still in their early stages and there remains some inconsistency in how they are used.

When we watched teaching and learning in classrooms together, we noticed that sometimes adults were not aware of how well pupils were doing when not working with a member of staff. This meant that some pupils finished their work quickly and did not use their time effectively to learn more. Sometimes, pupils were stuck but adults were unaware. This meant that some pupils could not complete their tasks effectively. There were also occasions when we found that the tasks that teachers had planned were not sufficiently challenging for the most able pupils. Evidence of work in books shows that, sometimes, the most able pupils find work too easy. As a result, some of the most able pupils are not making rapid enough progress.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your leadership team have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Staff follow the school's policies and procedures well to report any concerns they identify about pupils' welfare or well-being. Written records about any such concerns and the actions taken are timely and thorough. Evidence shows that you and your leaders work closely with families for the safety and protection of your pupils. You have a good understanding of the needs of individual pupils and plan support carefully to help them.

You have good links with external agencies and work effectively with other professionals when you think more help may be needed. You have detailed procedures in place to ensure that all appropriate checks are made when recruiting

new staff. Staff receive regular training to ensure that they maintain an awareness of safeguarding issues and are able to provide the necessary support.

Pupils say that they feel safe in school. They have a good awareness of how to stay safe when using the internet and know what to do should they have any concerns when they are online. Pupils are confident that adults will address any issues they have and know who to turn to for help. The curriculum provides a good range of opportunities for pupils to learn how to stay safe.

Inspection findings

- In 2018, the proportions of pupils reaching the expected standards in reading at the end of key stages 1 and 2 were below the national averages. Pupils' attainment in reading has been below the national average at the end of key stage 2 for several years. Pupils make average progress in reading across key stage 2 and this means that the gap between their attainment and that of pupils nationally has not been narrowed. I wanted to find out what you are doing to improve pupils' achievement in reading.
- Leaders are reflective and have identified that the previous approach to the teaching of reading comprehension was not allowing pupils to answer more complex questions about what they read. Pupils now focus upon different skills to help them understand what they read, such as predicting and summarising. You have placed a greater importance on the development of pupils' vocabulary and this is in its early stages. You have introduced a new approach to the teaching of reading that helps pupils to link their answers to evidence from the texts they read. However, evidence of work in books shows that the use of this approach remains inconsistent. Sometimes, pupils give answers that lack depth. Pupils are not encouraged to use examples from the text often enough or to relate their responses to their own experiences. This means that there are occasions when the most able pupils are not sufficiently challenged. As a result, the progress that the most able pupils make is slower than that of other pupils.
- Published information showed that, in mathematics in 2018, high prior-attaining pupils did not make good progress across key stage 2. A below-average proportion of pupils reached the higher standards. A key focus of this inspection, therefore, was to find out what you are doing to address this.
- The mathematics leader is new to his role and you have prepared him well to carry out his role effectively. He is knowledgeable about the subject and has already begun to provide staff with support. Leaders have identified that pupils have not had enough opportunities to use and apply their problem-solving and reasoning skills. Staff training and the subsequent conversations that staff have had with the mathematics leader have had positive results. Checks of pupils' books show that there is now more evidence of pupils tackling problems and reasoning about their answers and that pupils are given good opportunities to build on what they already know as they move up through the school. Most pupils are making good progress. However, evidence of work in books also shows that the tasks that teachers plan are not always challenging enough for the most able pupils. Sometimes, the most able pupils complete tasks quickly.

- Following your previous inspection, inspectors recommended that you improve attendance overall and improve the punctuality of those pupils that are persistently late. Despite some improvement in rates of attendance since 2015, published information still shows that, overall, it remained below the national average in 2018. Rates of persistent absenteeism were lower in 2018 than in 2017 but were also still above the national average. Therefore, I wanted to find out what you are doing to improve attendance.
- You and the governing body have taken appropriate steps to ensure that low attendance is addressed swiftly and strongly. You have put in place thorough systems to improve pupils' attendance. For example, leaders work closely with the educational welfare officer to remind parents and families of the importance of good attendance. Pupils' attendance is checked regularly to identify where the attendance of individual pupils, and of different groups of pupils, needs to improve. Although the rate of persistent absence remains above the national average, the steps you have taken have ensured that this has decreased significantly this year. School information on pupils' current rates of attendance indicates some further improvement. However, the attendance of pupils who speak English as an additional language remains below average. You have identified the reasons for this and are working hard to ensure that this improves.
- Your records show that there were a significant number of pupils who were late to school during the autumn term. You have reviewed how you promote punctuality and have a range of rewards in place for those pupils who arrive to school on time. You check pupils' punctuality carefully and know which pupils are frequently late. Your work with the educational welfare officer has been effective and there have been far fewer instances of lateness this term.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers and other adults respond more effectively to the changing needs of pupils within lessons
- teachers plan work that is sufficiently challenging for the most able pupils in reading and mathematics
- they continue to improve attendance, particularly for pupils who speak English as an additional language
- punctuality continues to improve.

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

Yours sincerely

Jaimie Holbrook
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and other senior leaders and explained my lines of enquiry. I also met with members of the governing body, a representative from the local authority, the subject leader for mathematics and the designated safeguarding leader. I reviewed the 101 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. There were no responses to Ofsted's questionnaires for staff or pupils. We visited classes together in key stages 1 and 2. I observed pupils' behaviour in lessons, met with a group of pupils and looked at samples of pupils' work. I viewed a range of documents, including leaders' evaluation of the school's current performance and the plans for further improvement. I considered a number of policy documents, including those relating to safeguarding. I examined the school's website to check that it meets legal requirements on the publication of specified information.