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24 February 2016

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Dear Mr Lynch

Short inspection of Heath Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 2 February 2016, 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 2011.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection and the school is continuing to improve. Your arrival as headteacher, in September 2015, has been well received by governors, staff and parents. Together with your deputy headteacher, you have acted as a catalyst for the school to build upon the good work done by your predecessor. You have identified the school's strengths quickly and accurately, highlighting ways in which the school can improve still further and reviewing your actions regularly to ensure that they are having an impact. Teachers and teaching assistants are embracing change with enthusiasm, open minds and a determination to improve outcomes for pupils. Governors are asking ever more searching questions and providing effective challenge to ensure that the pace of improvement is maintained.

Pupils I spoke to from Year 6 talked excitedly and knowledgeably about their work, with a fantastic description of their competition to build the tallest freestanding structure out of paper. This challenge was linked to work on the human skeleton, providing a good example of how their learning had captured their imagination and stretched their thinking. However, they also told me that school is not all about fun, with one saying that 'Teachers push you to your limits; they help you and push you further.'

Leaders and governors have acted effectively on the areas for improvement identified at the time of the last inspection. Displays around the school show that there is a strong commitment to promoting cultural diversity. In Reception, we saw children learning about Chinese New Year through singing a song and explaining its meaning. They were also practising saying and writing numbers 1 to 10, as well as some basic letters in Chinese script.

Over recent years, pupils' attainment and rates of progress have risen steadily throughout the school. Although there was a dip in performance at Key Stage 2 in 2015, higher than average proportions of pupils made more than the progress expected for their age in reading and mathematics. Marking in books is consistent with the school's policy but it does not have as much impact as intended, as teachers do not provide pupils with precise enough guidance. Pupils' books also show that there are not enough opportunities for pupils to use, apply and deepen their English and mathematical skills.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors place the highest priority on keeping children safe. The procedures for ensuring the safety of pupils continue to be exemplary, as they were at the time of the last inspection. I was left in no doubt that everybody in the school has a role to play in keeping each other safe. From the Playground Ambassadors of Year 6 to the governor responsible for pupil voice, it is clear that the views and opinions of children are heard and acted upon. Year 6 pupils talk confidently about how they feel valued by all adults in the school and the measures taken to keep them safe from harm. They are confident that adults will deal promptly and effectively with any concerns, highlighting the school's Worry Tree as an essential line of communication. The school's pastoral manager has a wealth of safeguarding knowledge and her support in school, and in the wider community, is highly valued by pupils and their parents. The fundamental British values of tolerance, respect and democracy are interwoven into the culture of the school, along with courtesy and consideration for others, including those who are visitors to the school.

Leaders and governors ensure that all safeguarding arrangements meet current requirements and records are detailed. Leaders analyse incident records to ensure that the school does not become complacent about safety. Staff and governors undertake regular safeguarding training and this is supported by clear and effective policies. Governors are particularly well briefed on their responsibilities and offer robust challenge to ensure that key leaders are monitoring and improving safeguarding systems and procedures on a regular basis.

Inspection findings

- Leaders and governors have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas in need of further development. There is a realistic and manageable plan for school improvement, which identifies a small number of

key priorities. Governors ask challenging questions of you to ensure its implementation and to check on its impact. Governors are clear about their roles and the importance of strong governance in driving school improvement. They gain first-hand knowledge through visiting the school and inviting leaders and pupils to present information at governor meetings. These actions allow them to hold leaders to account and provide valuable information to help map the future of the school. Governors are very knowledgeable about pupil outcomes and are clear about how additional grants, such as the pupil premium, are spent and the impact of that spending on raising pupil achievement.

- Leaders have reviewed and revised the school's systems for the assessment of pupil outcomes a number of times in recent months to ensure that they meet the needs of the revised National Curriculum. From work seen in pupils' books, the current system provides an increasingly accurate picture of pupils' progress and attainment. This approach of trial and improvement is characteristic of your leadership, with regular monitoring and thoughtful evaluation leading to timely and effective improvements across the school. Leaders review the progress of each pupil regularly through lesson observations, work scrutiny and ongoing assessment, with teachers being held accountable for the progress of their pupils during termly meetings.
- Children typically enter the early years at levels of development that are below those expected for their age. They make a very strong start to their school career thanks to tasks and learning that are well matched to their needs. The Nursery teacher understands the importance of preparing children for school life, encouraging regular attendance and promoting effective communication with parents. The benefit of this is seen in Reception with good-quality learning journey documents, which are well supported by parental input, tracking the developmental progress of each child. Very effective leadership of the early years ensures that baseline information about children is used to identify areas in need of particular development, and this results in strong progress by the time children move to Key Stage 1. In 2015, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development rose to a point where the proportion is now in line with national expectations.
- By the end of Year 1, an increasing number of pupils achieve the standard expected in the national phonics screening check although this is still slightly below the national average. The subject leader in charge of phonics is able to explain what has been done to achieve this and has a clear plan to support further improvement. At the end of Key Stage 1 in 2015 pupil attainment was broadly average, with higher than average proportions of pupils reaching higher levels of attainment in writing. Although pupil attainment and rates of progress were lower than in previous years, the vast

majority of pupils leaving Key Stage 2 made at least the progress expected of pupils their age, regardless of their ability or background.

- Work in pupils' books shows that they have made progress since the start of this year. At Key Stage 1, writing is stronger, with consistently high expectations for presentation and the development of skills through extended pieces of work. Mathematics books show that there is an over-emphasis on calculations that are inappropriate for children of that age, and not enough focus on practising and embedding basic skills. At Key Stage 2, there is less evidence of extended pieces of writing but, by Year 6, pupils have increasing opportunities to use and apply their mathematical knowledge. As a result of these inconsistencies, Key Stage 1 and 2 pupils do not have enough opportunities to embed and deepen their understanding of a range of basic writing and mathematical skills.
- Pupils' books are marked regularly, in accordance with the school's policy. They are encouraged to reflect on their work and respond to teachers' comments. However, teachers are not precise enough in their feedback to pupils to have the intended impact on pupils' next steps in learning. Consequently, pupils are not always clear about how to improve their work and some basic errors persist over time.
- Pupils behave well around the school and at different times of the day. By Year 6, they are able to have well-developed conversations about what they have learned, while expressing mature and well-informed opinions. In lessons, pupils are engaged in their work and eager to do their best, displaying enthusiastic attitudes to learning. Pupil attendance is consistently average or above, and families are punctual at the start of each day. The overwhelming majority of parents are very positive about the school. They believe that the level of care and support is of a consistently high quality, with a number speaking of how the school has offered additional support to families in times of need. They see communication with the staff of the school as being a strength, which helps to ensure that any issues are addressed in a timely fashion.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- Pupils' outcomes at Key Stages 1 and 2 continue to improve by:
 - providing increased opportunities for pupils to use and apply their writing and mathematics skills in order to deepen and broaden their learning

- ensuring that the precise identification of pupils' next steps in learning is used to help them fully understand how they can improve their work further.

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 County Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Stephen McMullan
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, the deputy headteacher, subject leaders, three governors, parents and pupils from Year 6. I considered responses of parents from Parent View, and from staff and pupils through online surveys they completed. We visited all classes in the school, spending a short time in each, and looked at a sample of pupils' work together. I looked at a range of documents including an evaluation of the school's performance and plans for further improvement, information on how the pupil premium is spent and a number of policy documents, including those for child protection and special educational needs.