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Mr Simon Witham
Executive Headteacher
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Dear Mr Witham

Short inspection of Thorpepark Academy

Following my visit to the school on 17 April 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in April 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in specific areas. This may indicate that the school has improved significantly overall. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a full section 5 inspection.

You and your head of school provide inspirational leadership and have an unwavering commitment to provide the best possible education for pupils. You have created a culture of high expectations that has led to exemplary teaching and very high rates of progress for pupils. Your passion for all pupils to do well is shared by all staff, and morale is exceptionally high.

You and the head of school have developed a highly effective leadership team and very skilled middle leaders. Leaders at all levels check the quality of teaching accurately and regularly to identify strengths that can be shared and areas that do not meet leaders' very high expectations. Astute use of high-quality professional development and weekly training sessions for teachers and their assistants have led to marked improvements in progress and attainment in key stages 1 and 2.

You were rightly pleased with the most recent outcomes for all groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and the most able, at the end of key stages 1 and 2

in 2017. At the end of key stage 2, pupils' progress increased strongly in writing and mathematics in comparison to the previous year. Exceptionally strong progress was maintained in reading. Overall, progress at the end of key stage 2 was among some of the highest in the country, and attainment was well above average. At the end of key stage 1, there were marked improvements in the proportion of pupils attaining greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics, indicating very strong progress from low starting points. You have successfully tackled a point made at the inspection of your predecessor school where you were asked to ensure that teaching brought about outstanding achievement.

Your head of school and subject leaders have made sure that the curriculum provides pupils with interesting and memorable experiences. For example, pupils were very keen to tell me about their visit to a transport museum and showed me their high-quality writing about transport throughout the ages. Teachers and subject leaders make sure that pupils have sufficient time to study topics in depth across a wide range of subjects, another point suggested from the previous inspection. When analysing pupils' work with your leaders, we saw teachers' highly effective planning leading to some impressive work in a wide range of subjects, especially art. However, there are times when pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding are not deepened consistently well in subjects other than English and mathematics.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have made sure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Your safeguarding team has established high-quality systems to make sure that pupils, including the most vulnerable, are safe and protected from harm. There is a clear ethos across the school that sets the safety of pupils as a high priority. Safeguarding records are of high quality and are kept meticulously. Your staff are vigilant and have a clear understanding that the safety of children is the responsibility of all staff.

Child protection training for staff means that they are knowledgeable and know what to do should they have any concerns about children's welfare. The school works closely with external agencies and parents and carers to ensure that children are safe. When necessary, the safeguarding team takes action to provide swift support for families who might need it to ensure that children are safe.

Governors make sure that all adults on the site are checked to confirm that they are fit to work with children. The school's central record of these checks is well kept and checked by you and your governors regularly. Parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, were confident that their children are safe in school.

In school, pupils behave well and are pleasant and polite. All the pupils I spoke with said that they feel safe and enjoy school. They are very confident that should they have any concerns, staff respond quickly to sort matters out for them.

Inspection findings

- You acknowledge that your staff's desire to continually improve the quality of their work and their high expectations are the key to your school's success.
- I was keen to find out if the marked improvements in writing and mathematics were being sustained. When checking pupils' work across the school, I found that high-quality writing and accurate spelling were the norm, not just in English books but across a wide range of subjects. In mathematics, there are many opportunities for pupils to practise problem-solving, develop mathematical reasoning skills and apply their skills in a wide range of subjects. Pupils make an excellent contribution to their learning and act on the advice given by their teachers to improve their work. Standards of presentation are excellent. Pupils take great pride in their work and have a thirst for learning.
- When visiting classes, I saw your teachers and their assistants questioning pupils very skilfully to deepen their knowledge and understanding of what is being learned. Staff check and assess pupils' work swiftly and clear up any misconceptions or add additional challenge when necessary. Pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, make rapid progress and enjoy their learning. You told me that questioning and assessment had been a focus for professional development. My visits to classrooms confirmed the very positive effect professional development is having on supporting strong teaching and pupils' swift progress.
- I also wanted to know how well phonics is being taught to support reading in key stage 1. I saw teachers providing well-structured, challenging activities and pupils who were keen to apply their well-developed phonics skills when reading. Pupils were very keen to read to me, including those who had not achieved the expected standard in phonics at the end of Year 1. I found that these pupils were making quick progress because their teachers and assistants provided good support.
- I visited the two-year-old provision with your head of school and was impressed by the wide range of tasks that children were readily working on. Adults showed great care for the children and there were many opportunities for children to develop their language skills. Already, the two-year-olds were sharing, taking turns and understanding some technical vocabulary in mathematics. We agreed that the two-year-old provision was providing a strong start for Nursery.
- Children in Nursery and Reception cooperate very well, making excellent use of the wide range of high-quality facilities both indoors and outdoors. Over time, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development has been improving. However, attainment in reading and writing has not been consistently strong for all groups of children. Your new early years leader has introduced reading and writing areas for small groups of children, both indoors and outdoors, to accelerate children's skills. I found that staff are using these well with children, and these skills are improving. Learning journals showed increasing proportions of children starting to exceed the early learning goals in writing because of the changes that have been made.
- Governors and trustees are astute and know the school exceptionally well. They are highly skilled, some in education, and hold you and other leaders to account.

They check the pupil premium funding, know how it is used and that it is having an excellent effect on pupils' progress.

- Although not included in my lines of enquiry for this inspection, it came to light that the school shares much of its strong practice across other trust schools, the city and parts of the Yorkshire and Humber region.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers and subject leaders increase pupils' depth of understanding and high-level skills consistently across subjects other than English and mathematics
- the proportion of children, particularly disadvantaged children, attaining the early learning goals in reading and writing are at least average.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for the City of Kingston upon Hull. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

James McGrath
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I visited lessons with your head of school and looked at pupils' work with middle and senior leaders. I met regularly with you as part of a professional dialogue throughout the day and also met your school improvement partner. I also met with the chair of the local governing body, the chair of the board of trustees and a director of the trust. I spoke to pupils throughout the day about their safety and learning in school and met with a small group of pupils to discuss their views about the school.

I analysed 35 responses to the Ofsted staff questionnaire, along with 96 parents' responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). I looked at the school's review of its own performance, its development and improvement plan, a number of key school policies and the minutes of governing body meetings. I considered a range of documentation in relation to child protection, safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.