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Mrs Alison Mann
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Mann

Short inspection of Marlcliffe Community Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 2 July 2019 with Peter Marsh, Ofsted Inspector, 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 April 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 your leaders, supported by the governing body, have an accurate view of the effectiveness of the school. You have developed a cohesive team and morale is high. Staff welcome the guidance and support of leaders to improve their teaching, and they appreciate that you consider their well-being as you work together to further improve the school. As a result, you have a stable staff, which has enabled you to embed the strengths from the last inspection and move forward with new development priorities. Staff are committed to ensuring that pupils receive a broad and interesting curriculum that prepares them for the next stage of their education. Displays demonstrate the wide range of learning opportunities and the high expectations you have of staff and pupils.

Pupils conduct themselves well around the school. In lessons, pupils work well with each other, show enthusiasm for their learning and take pride in their work. Pupils enjoy coming to school and say that teachers try their best to make learning 'fun'. Parents agree, with one summarising the views of many by saying, 'My daughter has been challenged and has flourished through the care, warmth and ambition her teachers hold for her.' The overwhelming majority of parents and carers would recommend the school. One parent commented, 'Whilst a large school, it has a personal feel and very welcoming culture.'

Leaders use assessment information carefully to check the progress pupils make, and they act quickly to ensure that any pupils who are not meeting your high expectations receive support to enable them to catch up. As a result, outcomes for pupils continue to

improve across the school. The proportion of pupils who are working at the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of both key stage 1 and key stage 2 is above the national average. Pupils' progress in key stage 2 is strong in reading and mathematics and in line with the national average in writing. In recent years, the progress of disadvantaged pupils in key stage 2 has strengthened.

You have responded well to the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. You were asked to ensure that pupils of all abilities were challenged with their writing. Pupils' imaginations have been captured by the use of interesting and challenging books. This develops pupils' vocabulary. They use new words enthusiastically in their own writing. The links between reading and writing provide a scaffold that encourages pupils of all abilities to write at length in all areas of the curriculum. You have introduced the use of models for writing to provide pupils with an understanding of 'what a good one looks like'. Leaders ensure that there is a clear sequence of teaching for each year group, and this allows frequent opportunities for pupils to embed their learning.

Following the last inspection, you were also asked to improve how pupils use the outdoor area in Reception. Leaders have invested heavily in this area and have ensured that it promotes pupils' progress. The area is adapted to meet the needs of children, for example children are encouraged to develop the physical skills they need for writing when they visit the outdoor writing station to write with chalk, paint-brushes and rollers. Children make a strong start to their time in school in the early years unit.

Governors undertake regular training and visit the school frequently to ensure that they are able to hold the school to account. Records of governors' meetings show that they ask challenging questions and seek verification of the impact of the work of the school.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a well-embedded culture of safeguarding in the school. Staff receive regular training and updates to help them be alert to signs that a child might be at risk of harm. Your team reports concerns in a timely manner. Staff take care to support the needs of vulnerable pupils and work effectively with other agencies to support children and families. Records are thorough and are shared with key staff when appropriate. All procedures are fit for purpose.

Pupils feel safe in school and say that bullying is rare. Pupils demonstrate an understanding of the different forms of bullying. Children help each other on the playground, with some trained as peer mediators to help children resolve problems before seeking the support of an adult. Other children are trained as sports leaders and they teach children new games and how to play well with each other. Pupils talked about their e-safety learning confidently and explained that they have been taught how to keep themselves safe online.

Inspection findings

- You are ambitious that all pupils will meet the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check and have set about making improvements to achieve this. Effective leadership and well-targeted training have resulted in some improvements to the teaching of phonics. Teachers now adjust teaching to match pupils' stage of development. Observations of phonics teaching showed that children are benefiting from a structured approach and regular opportunities to practise and remember new learning. You have purchased a new scheme of books to ensure that pupils practise the sounds they are learning when reading. An inspector observed teachers reading with children and could see that this practice is helping most pupils to make strong progress.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check, however, continues to be below that of other pupils. Although support is in place for these pupils, leaders do not always monitor the delivery and impact of these interventions.
- Regular meetings take place between leaders and teachers to review assessments of pupils' knowledge and their progress. Leaders hold teachers to account for making sure the tasks they set are sufficiently challenging and most-able pupils make strong progress. Leaders have worked with teachers to ensure that they have the appropriate subject knowledge to stretch this group. You have introduced a new method for the teaching of mathematics that encourages pupils to explain their thinking and apply their learning to solve problems. This has improved the progress of all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and/or most-able. In lessons, we saw teachers using questioning skilfully to stretch pupils' thinking, and books show that pupils regularly access work that challenges them in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils say systems in the classroom, such as talk partners and peer markers, help them to improve their work.
- Analysis of work in pupils' books showed that the teaching of spelling can lack precision and teachers do not always encourage pupils to improve this aspect.
- Leaders analyse the progress of disadvantaged pupils and use additional funding to provide a range of support, including pastoral support, interventions when pupils fall behind and additional adult support in the classroom. This is leading to improvements in the progress of disadvantaged pupils in key stage 2, which in 2018 was above the national average in reading and mathematics. Provisional outcomes for 2019 show that increased proportions of disadvantaged pupils have met the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 1. Additional funding is also used to ensure that disadvantaged pupils are ready for learning and are able to access a range of extra-curricular activities and participate in school visits, such as a residential trip to France. The school's pupil premium statement lacks detail, however, about how barriers are identified and how the impact of support is evaluated. Nevertheless, inspection activities found that the funding is used well to support disadvantaged pupils.
- In recent years, the attendance of pupils who are disadvantaged has been below the national average. In addition, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are

persistently absent has been above the national average. While you have begun working with an education welfare officer, this is not yet leading to sustained improvement. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils requires more precise monitoring and further action to reduce the frequency with which some of these pupils miss school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they evaluate the impact of strategies to support the development of early reading for disadvantaged pupils, so that a greater proportion meet the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check
- they improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils by analysing absences with greater precision and engaging sooner with parents of those disadvantaged pupils who frequently miss school
- all pupils develop strategies to enable them to spell words accurately when writing independently.

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

Yours sincerely

Timothy Scargill
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, inspectors met you and other leaders. I met two representatives of the governing body and spoke with a representative from the local authority on the telephone. We visited a range of lessons alongside leaders and looked at pupils' work in both key stages with subject leaders. We also observed teachers reading with pupils. An inspector met with two groups of pupils. We observed behaviour at playtime, during lessons and as pupils moved around the school.

Inspectors took account of 151 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 91 responses to its free-text facility. An inspector spoke to four parents before school. We took account of 30 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for staff. No pupils responded to Ofsted's pupils' survey. Inspectors checked the school website and examined a range of documentation, including minutes of governing body meetings, the school's self-evaluation, school development plans, safeguarding records and attendance information.