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Mrs Linsey Cavell
Headteacher
Normanton Common Primary Academy
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Dear Mrs Cavell

Short inspection of Normanton Common Primary Academy

Following my visit to the school on 27 February 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 2014.

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 certain areas. This may indicate that the school is improving towards being outstanding. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

Since your arrival in 2016, you have led the school with uncompromising vision and determination. You have high expectations of staff and are aspirational for pupils' success. You have wasted no time in recognising the improvements that are needed to be made to raise standards further, particularly in the early years and key stage 1. Decisions to distribute outstanding practitioners more widely across the school have resulted in improvements in current outcomes in key stage 1. The quality of leadership and management, in all areas of the school, is a strength. You and your leaders provide effective support to develop highly effective practice and achieve a consistency of approach across the school.

In the past, by the time pupils finish key stage 1, they have attained lower than average standards in English and mathematics. You have taken action to address this and pupils are now well on their way to achieving at least average standards. You expect teachers to place a strong emphasis on the development of reading, writing and mathematical skills to ensure that pupils are well prepared for secondary school when they leave. Teachers do this well and as a result pupils make rapid progress, so that by the end of Year 6, standards in reading, writing and

mathematics are above those seen nationally. This achievement is all the more impressive given the barriers to learning that many pupils face. Pupils' achievement in reading and mathematics is particularly noteworthy. In these subjects, pupils' progress has been in the top 20% of schools nationally for the past two years. Moreover, many disadvantaged pupils make better progress in English and mathematics than non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Trust leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and use this to provide valuable support to all aspects of the school. Staff have opportunities to check their work effectively with other schools in the multi-academy trust. The governing body has recently had some change in its membership. New governors bring particular skills and experience, which they use to hold leaders increasingly to account.

Pupils who need extra help with their learning or support to deal with social and emotional issues, receive it. The pastoral team provides particularly well for vulnerable pupils, including some who have very challenging behaviour. To support pupils' behaviour, you have instigated a number of initiatives, including staff and parenting workshops. During the inspection, a member of staff commented on one of the workshops around positive behaviour, stating 'it has changed my life'.

The two assistant headteachers, who lead on English and mathematics, have had a positive impact on raising attainment through a clear focus on developing reading, writing, number fluency and reasoning. They check the impact of their work well through reviewing pupils' books, analysing pupils' progress information and holding regular meetings with staff. Leaders deliver staff training within the school and are also used as an example of strong practice to other schools within the multi-academy trust.

The teaching of writing is effective. Pupils produce work of a high quality, and an increasing number of pupils are working at the highest standard. The learning environment around school and in classrooms is enhanced by displays that celebrate pupils' achievements and support their learning. Leaders ensure that these displays are always of the highest quality, reinforcing pupils' sense of pride in themselves and their school.

Some of your teachers ensure that parents can support their children's learning through a variety of home learning activities. As a result, pupils enjoy completing their homework, which complements their work in school. One pupil said, 'Homework is fun! We get to try all sorts of ideas linked to our topic. Even my dad likes doing it.'

Safeguarding is effective.

You have established a strong culture of safeguarding, and arrangements are fit for purpose. Staff receive regular training and understand their responsibilities. They are vigilant with regard to potential concerns. The school records information carefully so that a picture can be built up over time for each pupil. As a result,

pupils' needs and circumstances are known very well. The school's pastoral support team works closely with families and with other local services so that pupils who need help get appropriate support.

Pupils enjoy a rich curriculum where they learn road safety, water safety and how to use the internet safely. During the inspection, pupils were seen safely using ovens and utensils in the kitchen to make lasagne. Everyone was enjoying the opportunity to learn how to make a new dish and try different ingredients.

The pupils I spoke to informally around the school told me that they feel safe and happy at school. They consider bullying and poor behaviour to be rare and they are confident that any member of staff would listen to them if they have concerns. The responses to Ofsted's pupil survey reflect this positive view.

Inspection findings

- As part of this inspection, I investigated how well the provision in early years is enabling boys to make at least expected progress and preparing them for key stage 1. New assessment systems introduced by the early years leader have been reviewed to ensure validity of judgements. This means that leaders now have a more accurate picture of the knowledge, understanding and skills with which pupils typically enter school. Adults give children challenging tasks and children challenge themselves. For example, a group of boys in the Reception class were encouraged by an adult to move large resources around to make a giant castle in the outdoor area. The boys solved the problem of how to make a waterproof roof to prevent the snow entering! The proportion of children reaching a good level of development by the time they leave the Reception class has been lower than that found nationally, but they are now making much stronger progress. Leaders are continuing to focus on ensuring that more pupils reach a good level of development by the time they leave the Reception class, particularly boys.
- I was keen to explore with you and your leaders the work that has been done to support pupils with social and emotional needs. Effective support led by the pastoral team ensures that vulnerable pupils and their families are receiving appropriate care in a timely manner. The number of incidents of inappropriate behaviour has declined since September 2017. Pupils demonstrated positive attitudes to learning in all of the lessons I visited. Teaching assistants were seen supporting pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities well because they are aware of their needs and how to help them achieve the next steps in learning. Pupils know the Normanton Common 'rights and responsibilities' framework well and leaders ensure this is consistently upheld. As a result, pupils are courteous and take pride in their work and in being part of their school.
- The learning mentor rigorously monitors attendance. She quickly follows up non-attendance and has introduced a number of new systems to improve attendance. For example, she has displayed posters within prominent venues within the community, promoting the importance of attendance. Attendance has improved and is now more in line with last year's national average. The number of pupils

who are persistently absent has fallen. You continue to support a number of vulnerable families who need help in getting their children to attend school regularly.

- During the inspection, I focused on how effectively you and your leaders ensure that pupils in key stage 1 achieve well in reading and mathematics. I found that leaders have taken appropriate actions to ensure that pupils are now making stronger progress in key stage 1. I saw evidence in pupils' books of them making quick gains in their mathematical understanding. Teachers often give pupils challenges and activities that encourage them to reason and explain their mathematical thinking. Reading outcomes have been below the national average by the end of year 2. However, the current outcomes in reading in year 2 are much stronger and the number of pupils interested in books has risen across the school. Outcomes in the Year 1 phonics screening check have improved over the last three years, so pupils are well prepared to make good progress in reading in Year 2. The proportion of pupils that reaches the required standard in the phonics screening check has been above the national average for the last two years.
- I spent time examining the strategies introduced by the school to raise achievement in writing, particularly for boys. Pupils excel in writing. Pupils write in a range of subjects, and display high levels of confidence in writing for a variety of purposes. Work in pupils' books shows that teachers provide them with a good range of stimuli for writing. During the inspection, a number of boys showed me their work, which demonstrated the strong progress they have made and their ability to know how to apply the features of good writing across different genres. One boy said, 'I love writing, I love that we have freedom to use our imagination.'
- I also spent time looking at the work that has been done to evaluate teaching and learning in the wider curriculum. You and your leaders are passionate about pupils' wider development. This is evident in the breadth of the curriculum you provide and the range of clubs and visits that enthuse and excite pupils. Together with the multi-academy trust, you have developed pupils' interest in art. Displays around school show high-quality art work in a range of media. The recent addition of a cooking room has improved pupils' understanding of food and healthy eating. Last year, the school was awarded a Gold School Games Mark in recognition for the number of pupils who take part in the after-school sports clubs, as well as the increased participation in sporting competitions. Together with your leaders, we spent time looking at pupils' books, which showed that pupils have an opportunity to learn across a wide variety of subjects. However, teachers do not challenge pupils quite as well in subjects such as science and the humanities as they do in English and in mathematics.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers provide appropriate challenge for all pupils across all subjects of the curriculum, not just in English and mathematics
- improvements already made across the early years in all areas of learning are fully embedded so that a higher proportion of children, including boys, achieve a good level of development by the end of the Reception year.

I am copying this letter to the chief executive officer of the multi academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Wakefield. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Ella Besharati
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you and other members of the leadership team, including the two assistant headteachers, the early years leader and the lower key stage 2 leader. I met with four members of the governing body. I met with three representatives from the multi-academy trust. I met with a group of pupils and spoke informally to other pupils during the day. I examined the strategies introduced by the school to raise the achievement of pupils. I observed teaching and learning in the majority of classes. I looked at a range of pupils' books, some together with your assistant headteachers. I met with staff from your pastoral team, which included your pastoral school manager and learning mentor. I met with middle leaders in school, including the interim special educational needs and/or disabilities co-ordinator and reading leader. I also met with the school improvement officer. I took into account the views of the nine parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, as well as the 14 responses to Ofsted's staff survey and the 81 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey. I scrutinised the school's record of recruitment checks and I looked at a range of other documents related to safeguarding, attendance and behaviour. I took into account further documentation, including assessment information, school policies and information posted on the school's website.