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Miss Caroline Hall
Headteacher
Tennyson Road Infant School
Highfield Road
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Dear Miss Hall

Short inspection of Tennyson Road Infant School

Following my visit to the school on 30 January 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 the school was judged to be good in 2014.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

You and your staff provide pupils with a warm and caring environment. Pupils are well supported and their individual needs are considered carefully. You are a purposeful leader who knows the strengths of your school. You have evaluated accurately where further improvement is needed. You are well supported by a team who puts the needs of the pupils first.

Parents and carers speak highly of you and your team's support. They value the hard work and commitment that you show to their children on a daily basis. Pupils are enthusiastic learners and confident to speak with a range of adults. You are highly visible in the school and pupils make a point of sharing their news with you. Staff feel supported by you and value their professional development.

You and your staff understand the importance of providing pupils with real-life opportunities to understand the world around them. For example, pupils explained their enjoyment of their annual trip to the seaside. They said that they liked the opportunity of being able to put their feet in the sea and the chance to see lots of seagulls. You and your staff also use enrichment opportunities to show pupils the range of jobs they could do when they are older. You held a 'World of Work Day' where pupils were able to learn about the roles and responsibilities of firefighters and police officers. Some parents also came in to school to share their work experiences. Pupils valued the opportunity to learn about a

range of professions. Teachers used this opportunity in class to further develop pupils' writing skills.

At the time of the last inspection, leaders were asked to improve teaching and pupils' progress, especially in phonics. You and the English leader have ensured that staff have received training to deliver phonics. However, you recognise that further work is needed to ensure that staff use their training to ensure that pupils apply their phonics skills accurately to their reading.

At the previous inspection, you and your team were asked to provide work that sufficiently challenges the most able pupils. During the inspection, we noticed that not all teachers challenged the most able pupils consistently, particularly when mathematics was being taught.

You and your staff have worked hard to engage parents. For example, you have a family support worker who ensures that pupils and their families are being supported. She regularly catches up with parents on the playground and meets with them to discuss their needs. Your work in supporting families and their children is a high priority. You have established a range of parent groups which are well attended by families. You know that this will help families to enable their children to have a happy and positive school life.

During the inspection, I held discussions with subject leaders. They explained the introduction of a new assessment system intended to support teachers to monitor pupils' progress effectively. More time is needed for subject leaders and teachers to become more adept at using this system. Some subject leaders do not use pupils' assessment information well enough to understand the progress of different groups of pupils. Consequently, they do not have a secure overview of whole-school progress in their area of responsibility.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You provide regular training for all staff and governors. They understand thoroughly their roles and responsibilities. You work closely with your family support worker and school business manager to ensure that pupils attend school regularly. You monitor attendance closely and hold meetings with parents to encourage them to bring their children to school regularly. Your family support worker also does home visits and directs families to other external agencies. As a team, you work effectively to meet the needs of families and their children.

Your records are well kept and you keep a running record of information about pupils' individual circumstances. This enables you and your team to monitor any concerns that staff may have. Whenever there are concerns, you swiftly inform the relevant agencies.

Pupils feel safe and they know how the school keeps them safe. They know they must not share personal information online and they receive regular reminders from teachers about keeping safe when using the internet.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection, we looked at the teaching of phonics. Where the teaching of phonics is effective, pupils are highly engaged in their learning. The class teacher ensures that pupils say their sounds accurately. However, for the past three years, pupils have not achieved the national average at the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check. The proportion of boys achieving the expected standard is significantly behind the national average. Previously, staff have received phonics training. Nevertheless, you recognise that refresher training is needed to update skills and expertise in the provision of phonics across the school. You note that the provision of phonics is not monitored regularly enough so that teaching can be adapted to meet pupils' needs. In response, you, the Year 1 leader and the English leader have recently implemented a phonics club and introduced a new computer programme to help lower-attaining pupils catch up. It is too early to see the results of the new interventions in place.
- The early years leader works effectively with her team to provide a range of vibrant and stimulating learning activities for all pupils. She is aware that the proportion of boys achieving the expected standard in reading at the end of the early years has been below the national average. However, from their low starting points, boys make good progress in reading. Adults set up interesting activities where children can practise their early reading and writing skills. During our tour of the early years, children were reading and writing animal names based on their jungle theme. The outside area encourages children to develop their writing skills by providing a range of writing tools, such as chalk and brushes, to practise their letter formation. For those children needing to catch up, a range of interventions are provided and closely monitored to ensure that children make good progress.
- Disadvantaged pupils' assessment information and workbooks show that they do not make as much progress from their starting points as other pupils, particularly in writing. Not all teachers successfully adapt tasks to support disadvantaged pupils' needs, particularly those who are lower-attaining. This means that their progress is much slower than it could be. Since 2016, the difference in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally has reduced in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 1. However, the difference is still apparent, particularly in writing.
- During our tour of the school, we noticed that not all teachers provided mathematics activities that provided enough challenge for the most able pupils. Workbooks show that the most able pupils are given tasks that are too easy. In some cases, teachers do not move pupils' learning on fast enough and pupils are completing activities that repeat prior learning.
- Subject leaders' skills are not fully developed. Some subject leaders are not using pupils' assessment information well enough to help them plan and evaluate actions to improve the quality of teaching and learning. This means that subject leaders are not adapting whole-school provision of their area of responsibility to meet the needs of different groups of pupils. Some subject leaders do not have a complete overview of progress made by pupils in their area of responsibility because they do not check often enough on the quality of teaching and learning.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the quality of phonics teaching is improved so that a greater proportion of pupils, particularly boys, reach the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check
- teachers adapt writing activities to meet the needs of disadvantaged pupils so that they make more rapid progress
- teachers provide activities that provide sufficient challenge to the most able pupils in mathematics
- subject leaders' skills and expertise are fully developed so that they can improve outcomes in their area of responsibility.

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

Yours sincerely

Emma Nuttall
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you and I also met with four governors, including the chair of governors. I spoke with parents before school and with a group of pupils about their school experience. Jointly with you, I visited a range of classes and we sampled pupils' books. In addition, I checked the school's safeguarding arrangements and records, including the school's record of recruitment checks on staff. I evaluated the school's documentation about pupils' achievement, planning for improvement and attendance. I met with the English subject leader and the early years leader. I took account of the 23 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, and the four responses from parents to Ofsted's free-text service. There were 13 responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff. There were no pupil responses for me to consider.