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Mr Phil Thackstone  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Thackstone

### **Short inspection of Lingfield Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 9 November 2017, 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 2013.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have worked tirelessly to ensure that the school is outward looking and you have built strong and effective relationships with your local cluster of schools. Such is the strength of your partnership that your school is in the process of applying to become a multi-academy trust. Staff buy into your ambitious vision and are excited about the future. The strong collaborative culture that you have created across your partner schools ensures that staff are open and enthusiastic to improve their practice and to learn from colleagues. This supports the continuous improvement of the school and the continued good progress of pupils.

Your detailed tracking of pupils' assessment information gives you a very clear picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses. It enables you to pinpoint support for individuals when they fall behind in their learning, so that they can quickly catch up. You also use this information to inform your school improvement priorities for the forthcoming year effectively. However, objectives in your plans are not linked precisely enough to the gains in pupils' outcomes you desire. You and governors agreed that this would make it easier for you to evaluate the impact of your actions more accurately.

Since the last inspection, in addition to developing strong partnerships to share good practice, you have had a specific focus upon improving pupils' outcomes in mathematics. You have provided high-quality training and support to ensure strong

subject leadership and to raise pupils' achievement. This has paid dividends, and in 2017, pupils' progress at the end of key stage 2 was well above average and in the top 10% of schools nationally.

A strong feature of your leadership is to invest in your staff and develop and broaden their skills through high-quality training and support. The needs of the school and of individual members of staff are well considered. You nurture new subject leaders into their role successfully. Moving forward, this means that you have a committed, enthusiastic and knowledgeable staff team.

During the course of the last academic year, you have managed the long-term absence of several longstanding members of staff. A small minority of parents and carers rightly raised concerns about this. Despite your best efforts to secure long-term replacements, this has proved difficult. You acknowledge that your usual detailed monitoring of teaching and learning did not take place with the regularity you expect and this has led to some variability in practice, particularly in the support given to pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. This is no longer the case.

Governors bring a wide range of skills and expertise to their role and use them to support and challenge school leaders effectively. They are strongly committed to securing continuous improvement and share your vision for an exciting future. Together, you have invested heavily in improving the fabric of the building, so that pupils and staff feel valued and are proud of their school. Extensive building work has enhanced classroom layouts and created small purposeful areas where focused group and individual support can happen without distraction. Your expectations are such that the building is well maintained and all classrooms are well resourced and creatively displayed. This leads to a calm and purposeful learning environment in which pupils thrive.

You have introduced a consistent approach to behaviour management, where all staff share responsibility for managing pupils' behaviour. Their success in this area means that pupils across the school are polite and well mannered and are welcoming to visitors. They are proud to be part of Lingfield School. Older pupils can apply to be 'Lingfield leaders' and are proud ambassadors for the school, providing positive role models for younger pupils. As a result, pupils are happy in school and say, 'There is nothing we would change!'

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed. Rigorous checks are made on the suitability of all staff and volunteers to work with children. Staff and governors receive regular training to ensure that they are up to date with the most recent and relevant legislation. All staff understand the responsibility they have in keeping children safe.

Pupils say that they feel safe and that bullying 'just doesn't happen here'. This is because relationships are strong and pupils know that there is a trusted adult in whom they can confide.

You have nurtured a strong sense of community within school. Staff and pupils share a wider collective responsibility to look after those experiencing difficult and challenging times. You have carefully and sensitively nurtured this to be a strong aspect of the school's ethos. There is a well-embedded culture of generosity and care and a strong moral purpose for charitable giving. This is best exemplified by those causes close to the school's heart.

### **Inspection findings**

- One of my focuses for inspection was to check on pupils' progress in writing, particularly that of boys. Although pupils' attainment at the expected standard has been above the national average at key stages 1 and 2 over time, outcomes at the high standard have been variable, particularly for boys. In 2017, progress rates at the end of key stage 2 were average. You had already identified this as an area for improvement and, together with your deputy headteacher, you have introduced an approach to writing that uses good-quality texts as a stimulus for pupils' writing. Strong links with other subjects are engaging pupils and providing a purpose for writing, especially for boys. For example, pupils in Year 2 were writing information texts about minibeasts that they had researched in science. The evidence in pupils' books shows that they make good progress from their starting points and are becoming increasingly secure in applying grammar, spelling and punctuation rules. However, we found that boys were less consistent than girls in sustaining their style of writing over longer pieces. You recognise that this is something you need to monitor more closely.
- Another focus of the inspection was to check the progress made by disadvantaged pupils. While there are too few disadvantaged pupils within the school to form any meaningful comparison with national averages, I found that they make equally good progress as their peers. When this is occasionally not the case, it is because pupils have additional and complex needs. We discussed the shortcomings of the school's pupil premium strategy available on the school's website. We agreed that identifying barriers to learning would, in some cases, make individual pupils identifiable.
- I also wanted to check on the progress of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. The proportion of these pupils is below the national average, but over time, very few have reached the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2. I found that systems are in place to identify pupils' needs and monitor their progress in a timely manner. The special educational needs coordinator has established effective links with external agencies and uses their support and advice to inform additional intervention and support effectively. However, the impact of support from additional adults is variable. Occasionally, adults do too much for pupils and this masks pupils' progress. You acknowledge that you have relied upon teachers to monitor the

impact of additional adults giving support in their classes, but this is something you need to do more robustly in the future.

- I also wanted to focus upon the attendance of this group of pupils, as their absence was higher than the national average. You monitor pupils' absence carefully and diligently and the spike in absence identified in the data for the academic year 2016/17 was for medical reasons.
- My final focus was to check on the quality of teaching in key stage 1, as outcomes in 2016 and 2017 appeared to have dipped compared with those before the introduction of the new standards. I found that teaching has remained good and that the dip was attributable to historical staffing turbulence. Relationships are strong and teachers use their questioning and assessment information to plan activities that are matched to pupils' needs effectively. Approaches to the teaching of writing and mathematics are consistent across the key stage and in line with school policy. This is supporting pupils' good progress. Pupils are also encouraged to become independent learners. For example, a pupil in Year 1 explained to inspectors, 'this is where it gets tricky!' as they used their knowledge of initial sounds and a phonic sound mat to spell 'b-oo-k' successfully. As a result, pupils are effectively developing their skills to work independently and becoming less dependent upon additional adult support.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- leaders' monitoring focuses upon boys' writing and the progress of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities
- action plans are precisely linked to gains in pupils' outcomes so they can be evaluated accurately.

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

Yours sincerely

Diane Buckle  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

I met with you to discuss the impact of the actions you are taking to improve the school and to discuss safeguarding arrangements. We observed learning together in most classes and we talked to pupils about their learning. I also held meetings with five representatives of the governing body, including the chair and vice-chair. I held a telephone discussion with the local authority's school improvement adviser. I

talked informally to pupils in classes, at playtime and around school. I also talked formally with eight pupils and listened to them read. I reviewed the provisional results for the national assessment tests in summer 2017 for pupils at the end of key stage 2. I also checked the assessment information of all other year groups, and groups of pupils for the last academic year. I reviewed a selection of pupils' books with the deputy headteacher, as well as reviewing pupils' books in class. Account was taken of the 18 responses from the Ofsted staff survey and the 75 responses to Ofsted's parent questionnaire, Parent View. A number of documents were scrutinised. These included a range of safeguarding documents, the school's written evaluation of its work and the school improvement plan. I also reviewed minutes from recent full governing body meetings and committee meetings.