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17 September 2018

Mr Stephen Bower  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Bower

### **Short inspection of Toll Bar Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 11 July 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 February 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 have made significant changes to many aspects of the school. Displays of pupils' work provide good examples of the quality of work you expect to see. The range of high-quality artwork displayed around the school is impressive. You are working hard to raise the aspirations of the pupils and you are developing a supportive leadership team to help you to reach these goals. However, some of the actions that you have taken to improve the school have not yet improved outcomes for pupils in reading and writing. Similarly, although improved, pupils' attendance remains low.

Parents are supportive of the school and say that their children are happy to come to school. They feel that the teachers provide good support for their children and that children are safe. Pupils are generally well behaved in school but, on occasions, they do not move around the building sensibly, sometimes running in corridors or displaying boisterous behaviour. In lessons, pupils are rarely disruptive but they have a tendency to lose focus quickly. They do not pay full attention to the guidance that adults offer them. This means that sometimes pupils do not learn as much as they could, or are capable of producing more work. Pupils can be slow to begin their work and, again, this means that valuable learning time is lost.

During the last inspection, inspectors felt that teachers did not always use

questioning well enough to enable pupils to think hard and deepen their understanding. Staff training has been provided. You have focused on improving adults' skills in questioning so that this aspect of teaching has improved to some degree. However, not enough has been done to ensure that all teachers and teaching assistants are confident and skilful in using questions effectively to deepen pupils' understanding.

At the last inspection, inspectors noticed that pupils did not get enough opportunity to apply their mathematical skills to real-life scenarios. You have adapted the approach to the teaching of mathematics and teachers now try to plan activities that enable pupils to link mathematics to real-life situations. We watched some pupils estimating time and beginning to understand what a second and a minute represents when undertaking day-to-day activities. Pupils have opportunities to apply their mathematical skills to different contexts and to give explanations as to how they worked out their answers.

The previous inspection also identified that pupils did not write at length often enough in English and in other subjects to extend their literacy skills. When I looked at books with your English leader, we recognised that pupils now have numerous opportunities to write at length. Lessons build upon one another to help pupils to produce longer pieces of writing. Pupils write for a wide variety of reasons and there are good links to other curriculum areas. You have begun to emphasise the importance of pupils' handwriting and presentation. Although improving, the quality of handwriting and presentation is still not good enough. Pupils do not use their knowledge of punctuation and grammar consistently in their writing.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You and your staff place the safeguarding of pupils as a high priority. Safeguarding procedures are fit for purpose and are understood by all staff. As a result, staff are vigilant and know what they must do if they have any concerns. Staff understand their need to report any concerns to you or your deputy safeguarding lead. They know who to talk to should they have any concerns about the conduct of adults. You liaise well with the local authority should you need any advice. You make appropriate checks to ensure that newly appointed staff are fit to work with children. Governors provide you with challenge to ensure that your safeguarding procedures are adhered to.

Pupils say that they feel safe in school. They appreciate the improvements you have made to the security of the school site. Pupils understand the difference between bullying and 'falling out' and know who to speak to if they are worried. Pupils do have some minor concerns about behaviour around the school. They say that there are occasions when pupils fall out. However, they feel that if they were to have any problems, these would be addressed properly. Pupils feel assured that staff would put a stop to any instances of bullying that might occur. You provide pupils with a range of opportunities in the curriculum to learn how to stay safe. Pupils are particularly knowledgeable about how they can stay safe online and understand what to do if they had any concerns when using the internet.

You have put in place rigorous systems to improve pupils' attendance. Pupils' attendance is checked regularly by staff to identify where the attendance of individual pupils and different groups of pupils needs to improve. Although the rate of persistent absence remains above the national average, the steps you have taken have ensured that it has decreased significantly this year. Overall attendance remains low but does show signs of improvement. You and the governing body have taken appropriate steps to ensure that poor attendance is tackled swiftly and robustly. Although attendance is beginning to improve, there is still more that you could do to continue this upward trend.

### **Inspection findings**

- I looked closely at how effectively you were acting to improve outcomes in reading. Pupils' outcomes at the end of key stage 1 were in the bottom 10% of all schools nationally last year. Similarly, attainment in reading at the end of key stage 2 was low and the progress that pupils made across the key stage was well below the national average. You have taken steps to review the way that reading is taught in school. The English leader has provided staff with relevant training and has checked the quality of teaching in each class. You are encouraging pupils to read more often by providing reading challenges, and pupils are now able to use a more attractive library area. The books you have purchased are of a higher quality and provide pupils with a wider range of texts to read.
- As a result of your actions, more pupils have made good progress in reading by the end of key stage 1 this year. The improvements you have made to the quality of teaching and learning in the early years have prepared children well for key stage 1. However, your actions have yet to affect outcomes in key stage 2. Pupils' attainment at the end of key stage 2 remains well below the national average. Not enough pupils reach the expected standards and very few reach the higher standards. Pupils do not make enough progress in reading across key stage 2 from their different starting points.
- The proportion of pupils reaching the higher standards in writing has been low in recent years. I wanted to find out whether teachers provide pupils with sufficient challenge when they plan writing tasks. There have been improvements in the teaching of writing. For example, some teachers provide pupils with clear examples of what to include in their writing and how to use different aspects of grammar. However, not all teachers have been able to do this successfully. Often, the work that teachers plan for pupils is not difficult enough for the most able pupils. This means that they are not challenged sufficiently. When I looked at books with the English leader we found that progress for the most able pupils was not good. Teachers carry out assessments at the start of each piece of writing. However, they do not use these effectively enough to identify the specific needs of pupils or to plan suitable tasks to meet pupils' needs.
- The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 1 was in the bottom 10% of schools nationally last year. I checked what you had done to improve outcomes at the end of key stage 1 this year. You have given teachers high levels of support to help them to improve the quality of their teaching. Pupils receive good-quality

support from teaching assistants in each year group. A greater emphasis on the development of early reading and writing skills in the early years has enabled pupils to make better progress across key stage 1. More pupils now reach the standards expected in the Year 1 phonics screening check, narrowing the gap with the national average.

- As a result of the actions you have taken, more pupils now reach the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 1. Pupils' outcomes are closer to the national average. More pupils reach the higher standards in reading and mathematics. The proportion of pupils in key stage 1 that reach the higher standard in writing, however, remains below the national average.
- I examined how effectively you use the pupil premium funding to support disadvantaged pupils in key stage 1. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 1 has been well below the national average for other pupils in recent years. You now have detailed plans in place that identify the barriers to learning for these pupils. The actions you have planned match their needs well. The checks you make on the progress of disadvantaged pupils throughout the year ensure that the use of additional funding is regularly reviewed. As a result of your work, disadvantaged pupils make similar progress to their peers during their time in key stage 1. Their attainment is now higher than their peers within school in reading, writing and mathematics by the time they reach the end of key stage 1.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils' attitudes to their work improve so that they remain focused on their learning
- guidance and training for teachers improves their skills in asking questions that deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding
- pupils' attendance continues to improve
- the teaching of writing improves so that all pupils, especially the most able, are sufficiently challenged to enable all pupils to make good progress
- the presentation of pupils' work improves, and pupils use their understanding of spelling and grammar more accurately in their written work
- the teaching of reading in key stage 2 improves so that more pupils make good progress.

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

Yours sincerely

Jaimie Holbrook  
**Ofsted Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met you and shared my lines of enquiry. I also met with members of the governing body, a representative from the local authority, the subject leader for English and the designated safeguarding leader. We visited classes together in key stages 1 and 2. I observed pupils' behaviour in lessons, met with a group of pupils and looked at samples of pupils' work. I viewed a range of documents, including leaders' evaluation of the school's current performance and its plans for further improvement. I considered a number of policy documents, including those for safeguarding and for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. I examined the school's website to check that it meets requirements on the publication of specified information. I also considered 12 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including parents' free-text comments. There were no responses to Ofsted's questionnaires for staff or pupils.