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Miss Sally-Ann Seward
Headteacher
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Dear Miss Seward

Short inspection of Arkwright Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 8 February 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 November 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You are steadfast in your view that the school should be at the heart of the community and that it should serve its community well. You are a highly visible leader and greet pupils and their parents or carers at school each day. You know pupils and their families extremely well. The parents I spoke with, and those parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, were in common agreement that the school was highly valued. They also agree that your leadership has ensured that pupils achieve well and receive excellent care and support. Many parents were keen to comment on individual teachers who often go 'the extra mile' in order to meet their children's learning needs. Many parents also praised the way in which older pupils take seriously their role to take care of their younger peers.

The school is well organised and calm and routines are well established. This is evident in classrooms and on corridors. Pupils quickly settle to their lessons and in many classrooms there is a positive learning 'buzz'. They speak proudly about their achievements and the achievements of their peers. It is with courtesy and often kindness that pupils greet each other, play and learn. Pupils told the inspector that they are proud of their school. They said that they particularly value that their school is a small school. In their view, this means that they are able to receive the individualised help and support that help them to succeed. It also means that they know everyone and that everyone knows them.

You have worked closely to address the areas of improvement identified at the time of the previous inspection. You have focused on improving standards in writing throughout the school. Pupils' writing has improved. They are attaining at the levels that their starting points indicate, particularly at key stage 1. At key stage 2, the work in pupils' workbooks indicates that they regularly produce extended pieces of writing both within their English lessons and in other curriculum areas. Writing 'non-negotiables' are known and applied by pupils with positive effect. You are correct to identify that further work is required so that pupils confidently apply spelling, punctuation and grammatical skills in extended pieces of writing.

Inspectors at the previous inspection identified the need to strengthen pupils' cultural development. You have worked decisively to address this. The formal link between this school and Bakoteh School in The Gambia is just one example of the many ways in which you have ensured that pupils interact first hand with their counterparts from other communities. All pupils visit the theatre, take part in outdoor pursuits and celebrate a range of cultural and religious festivals.

The previous inspection report highlighted the need to improve the attendance of a small number of pupils who fail to attend school regularly enough. In this matter, you have been resolute. You meet regularly with parents, have good systems in place and effectively reward pupils for attending well. You are vigilant in your efforts to ensure that attendance is consistently good. This issue remains a stubborn challenge.

Pupils' outcomes in mathematics by the end of key stage 2 dipped in 2016. You have swiftly identified the reasons for this and have taken immediate action. Pupil numbers are low and this means that information about pupils' achievement requires careful scrutiny. Even so, some pupils did not achieve as well as they should. A range of intensive help is in place for pupils. Regular meetings happen so that you can check with teachers that pupils are on track to achieve the targets that they have been set. Moderation with other schools takes place to ensure that teachers' assessments are accurate. Ensuring that pupils achieve as they should at the end of key stage 2 in mathematics remains a key priority.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors have ensured a positive culture that promotes pupils' safeguarding and welfare. An efficient system is in place to ensure a prompt response to urgent matters. Records are detailed and of high quality. Work with external agencies is good.

You are well informed about the barriers to learning that exist for your pupils and their families. You said that the starting point when working to address these is 'How can we help?' You are keen to find solutions to ensure that pupils are in school, are learning and are safe. Leaders, governors and staff undertake regular training relevant to child protection and safeguarding issues, such as raising awareness of the risks of extremism. A safeguarding policy is in place, meets current requirements and is well understood by all staff.

Pupils said that they feel safe in their school. They said that they have many people to whom they can turn if they have a problem. They particularly value the 'listening ear counsellor'. One pupil told the inspector that she thought that 'all her teachers are trustworthy.'

Inspection findings

- You have dealt effectively with the areas of improvement that were identified at the previous inspection.
- Pupils' outcomes in writing have improved. This is particularly the case in key stage 1, where increasing numbers of pupils are achieving at a greater depth. In the early years, more children achieve a good level of development, of which writing is a key area of learning. At key stage 2, pupils' extended writing requires further accuracy.
- Staff are receiving appropriate training and professional development as a result of the partnership with the local cluster of schools and the teaching school alliance. This has been of particular benefit in order to improve further the quality of mathematics teaching in key stage 2.
- Levels of pupil absence have been inconsistent, particularly rates of persistent absence, which were above the national average last year. The low pupil numbers at the school mean that a small number of extended absences had a significant impact on these figures. However, good systems are in place both to challenge poor attendance and to reward those pupils who regularly come to school.
- The governing body provides effective support and governors know the school well. Governors have evaluated how effective they are and adapted the committee structure, ways of working and membership, in order to conduct their role in a professional manner. They have maintained good oversight of the school's finances and have offered appropriate challenge.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the number of pupils who fail to attend school regularly continues to reduce
- the improvement in mathematics continues and pupils achieve as they should at the end of key stage 2
- teachers continue to ensure that good spelling, punctuation and grammar are embedded into pupils' writing.

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

Yours sincerely

Jayne Ashman
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and we discussed and then agreed the lines of enquiry. I spoke, by telephone, with the chair of the governing body and also a representative from the local authority. I met with all staff during the morning briefing meeting. I spoke with six parents at the start of the school day and considered the views of a further 25 parents, which were posted on Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. I viewed a range of documents, including an evaluation of the school's performance, information regarding pupils' achievement and attendance and a number of school policies. I reviewed the school's safeguarding and welfare arrangements and documentation. Together, you and I reviewed a sample of the work of Year 6 pupils. I met formally with the Year 6 pupils.

The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.