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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mrs Zoe Cannon
Headteacher
Ravensdale Junior School
Devonshire Drive
Mickleover
Derby
DE3 9EY

Dear Mrs Cannon

Short inspection of Ravensdale Junior School

Following my visit to the school on 20 June 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 July 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 and the other leaders at the school are analytical and candidly self-evaluative about the school. You identify accurately things that need to be improved. You make decisions about what to do based on sound evidence, including information about the pupils' progress and attainment.

Typically, the actions that you take result in improvements for the pupils. When they do not, you identify the problem quickly and make appropriate changes. This was apparent, for example, in the changes that you have made to the way that the staff assess the progress of the pupils. Your reasoned and flexible approach means that, if a seemingly good idea proves not to be successful, you do not just carry on regardless.

You have dealt well with an area for improvement from the previous inspection of the school to strengthen subject leadership. You have introduced a structured and systematic approach to these leadership functions. You have secured the leadership of provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, after a fairly lengthy period of instability.

The approach to subject leadership has made clear to the leaders, and to the staff more generally, what is expected from them. The special educational needs coordinator and the subject leaders have been given training and development opportunities that have increased their skills, for example in how to monitor the

work of the school. As a result, the leaders are motivated and able to fulfil their responsibilities.

The changes that you have introduced in the way that the teachers assess how well the pupils are doing have helped to improve the quality of teaching. The pupils now understand clearly what they are intended to be learning, which was an area for improvement at the previous inspection. They understand also how well they are doing and what they need to do better.

The systematic approach to assessing the pupils' achievement helps the staff to see which pupils are at risk of underachieving. That leads to those pupils, including the most able pupils who may not be fulfilling their potential, being given effective additional help.

It became clear during the course of the inspection that, currently, not enough pupils are being helped sufficiently to move on to high levels of achievement. That is particularly so in reading and writing, though also still in mathematics, despite improvements in that subject. Also, some groups of pupils, particularly the pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, still do not make quite as much progress as other groups at the school.

You have revised comprehensively the way that mathematics is taught. You took the decision to do so having correctly identified an area for improvement by looking at information about the pupils' achievement in the subject. You are starting to see the benefits of the changes in recent information that shows the pupils making better progress in the subject currently, than was the case previously.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that records are detailed and of good quality. You have established a positive ethos for safeguarding. The governing body maintains appropriate oversight of this area of work.

The staff are given training regularly and kept up to date with the latest government guidance. They know what to look out for and what to do if they are concerned about anything. The school has simple and effective procedures for reporting concerns and the staff use the systems appropriately, including, for example, the midday supervisors.

You show initiative. For example, you commissioned an external audit of the school's work to safeguard the pupils. You have acted on the findings and made improvements, including a major improvement to the security of the school site. That has significantly increased the extent to which the pupils feel safe at the school.

The pupils are taught to keep themselves safe in a range of circumstances. They develop sensible attitudes to everyday risks. They raise few concerns about bullying, including racist and homophobic name-calling, and made it clear to me that the rare instances at the school are usually dealt with effectively.

You use a range of suitable methods to deal with pupils' absence, particularly the relatively high levels apparent among certain groups, such as the pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The proportion of exclusions among that group of pupils has been too high recently. It is now declining.

Inspection findings

- You have strengthened the school's approach to managing the performance of the staff. You have established a routine and regular cycle of improvement, beginning with that analytical and candid self-evaluation. The approach is helping to increase the pace of improvement at the school.
- You have made the provision for the pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities more systematic than it was. You have focused the work of teaching assistants more on helping the pupils to do their work themselves.
- You make appropriate adaptations to meet the learning needs of the pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, but the school experiences difficulties in obtaining the full level of support required, particularly for the pupils who have the most difficulty with their behaviour. This inhibits the progress made by those pupils.
- The teachers' responses to the pupils' work improve the pupils' understanding of what they are learning and help the pupils to identify and to correct errors. It was apparent to us both, when we looked together at examples of the pupils' work, that the new approach to assessing and commenting on the pupils' work was not being used as consistently as you need it to be.
- Some individual cases of high levels of absence are proving stubborn. They have a significant impact on the overall levels of attendance among the pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and among disadvantaged pupils.
- The pupils understand well that people are different and they show tolerance towards the pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities who have difficulties controlling their behaviour. They have some concerns, though not major, about the behaviour of a few, which sometimes gets in the way of their learning and, occasionally, makes a few feel a bit less safe.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the teaching enables more pupils to reach higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics

- exclusions among pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are reduced, including by enabling the staff to deal more effectively with challenging behaviour.

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

Yours sincerely

Clive Moss
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you and senior leaders; the designated leader for safeguarding and the learning mentor; the mathematics and religious education coordinators and the special educational needs coordinator. I met with members of the governing body. I held a discussion with a representative of the local authority. I made a series of visits to lessons, jointly with you. I discussed the work of the school with the pupils formally, in a group, and informally during lessons. I looked at examples of the pupils' work during lessons, including examples of their workbooks. I looked at the views of parents expressed using the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, and looked at the results of parental surveys carried out by the school. I looked at the results of the inspection surveys completed by the staff and the pupils. I scrutinised various documents, including safeguarding records, a range of policy documents, the school's information about the current progress of the pupils and files maintained by subject leaders.