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Mrs Sadler
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Sadler

Short inspection of Stenson Fields Primary Community School

Following my visit to the school on 18 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 July 2013.

Based on the evidence available during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement, which I advise the school to address. In the 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 of good as a result of this inspection.

Following the last inspection, leaders were asked to raise pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics. Leaders have been partially effective in addressing this priority. In 2017, the proportions of children achieving a good level of development in early years, and of pupils achieving the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check, were above the national averages. At the end of key stage 1, the proportions of pupils who achieved the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics were close to those seen nationally. However, pupils' attainment and particularly progress at the end of key stage 2 were below the national averages for reading, writing and mathematics. Too many pupils, including the most able and those who are disadvantaged, did not make the progress they should have.

The many relevant initiatives you have introduced or are developing are beginning to improve pupils' attainment and progress. You and the senior leaders have established a clear vision and 'direction of travel' for the school. You are establishing a culture of increasingly high expectations of what pupils can achieve. However, the impact on standards of some of your and your staff's actions has not been as rapid as it could be.

Your plans for improvement accurately identify the actions needed to bring about necessary improvements. You make effective use of external support, provide relevant staff training and work with other schools to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

Teachers praise pupils' efforts, and as a result, pupils have excellent attitudes to learning. Pupils take care and show pride in their work. Teachers are often effective in asking questions to check on pupils' understanding or take learning forward. Teachers expect pupils to be able to explain their thinking. Teaching assistants are well deployed to support pupils' learning. School information and pupils' work show that standards are improving.

Pupils are proud of their school. Leaders and other staff have ensured that there is an ethos of mutual respect. The majority of parents I spoke with or who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, are happy with all aspects of the school. They say that their children are safe and enjoy coming to school.

Since the last inspection, standards of behaviour have remained high. Pupils have very positive attitudes. They listen well and apply themselves to all that is asked of them. Pupils spoke confidently to me about their learning and school life in general. Pupils from the 'newspaper squad', for example, enthusiastically told me on the playground about the stories they were collecting for their termly newsletter. Pupils told me how the key stage 2 'learning buddies' support younger pupils with their reading and spelling. Pupils are confident, respectful and reflective.

The governing body has a good understanding of the school's strengths and knows where it should improve further. Governors regularly visit the school and are committed to helping drive further improvement. However, they are not as effective as they could be in challenging and holding leaders to account for aspects of the school's effectiveness. Leaders' and governors' evaluation of the effectiveness of the pupil premium to accelerate the progress and raise the attainment of disadvantaged pupils, for example, is not sharp enough.

Safeguarding is effective.

The school has a strong culture of safeguarding. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Records are detailed and of a high quality. Leaders take timely action when they have any concerns about pupils' well-being. Staff receive relevant and up-to-date training. Governors visit the school to check safeguarding arrangements and are aware of their responsibilities. The school's single central record and recruitment processes are thorough.

I was struck by the very positive relationships between pupils and staff, and between pupils. You and other staff have ensured that the school has a friendly atmosphere. Pupils are respectful of people's different backgrounds. A Year 6 pupil said, 'It's rude to disrespect people. People choose different ways in life.' The ethos of care is reflected in the attitudes and dispositions of your pupils. Pupils are confident that adults will help them if needed and they say that they feel safe.

Pupils say that bullying is very rare.

Inspection findings

- Recently introduced initiatives to improve standards in writing are having a positive impact on the quality of pupils' work. Teachers teach pupils how to improve the quality, quantity, structure and use of language in their writing. As a result, standards are improving. However, teachers' expectations of the accuracy of pupils' grammar and punctuation are not consistent. Sometimes, the quality of pupils' writing is higher in English than it is in other subjects.
- Leaders and staff have carried out work to further develop the 'mastery' curriculum. Some teachers effectively use visual imagery and apparatus to support pupils' understanding of mathematics and ensure that pupils have opportunities to develop their problem-solving and reasoning skills in mathematics. However, leaders have not ensured that this is consistent across the school and in different mathematical topics. Consequently, some pupils, particularly the most able, do not make the progress they should and develop their understanding at greater depth.
- Sometimes, particularly in mathematics, teachers do not ensure that pupils move on to more challenging work quickly enough. Often, pupils of different abilities complete similar work. Teachers do not consistently ensure that learning is well matched to pupils' needs. As a result, again, particularly the most able pupils sometimes do not make the progress they should.
- The minutes of the meetings of the governing body show that governors do not ask challenging enough questions about the progress of different groups of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged.
- Teachers are enthusiastic and provide pupils with interesting work. They provide well-chosen resources and prompts, for example the 'writing toolkits', which pupils know how to use to support their learning. Pupils respect their teachers. Teaching assistants provide good support in lessons.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they check that their actions to drive more rapid improvement, including the work to develop pupils' problem-solving and reasoning skills in mathematics, are implemented consistently by all staff
- all teachers match work well, particularly in mathematics, to pupils' abilities to ensure that all pupils, particularly the most able, make the progress they should
- all teachers teach pupils how to use punctuation and grammar accurately to improve further the quality of their writing in all subjects
- the governing body is more effective in holding leaders to account for the progress pupils make, including the use of the pupil premium to ensure that disadvantaged pupils make accelerated 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 Derbyshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

John Lawson
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

The inspector met with the headteacher and members of the governing body. The inspector spoke with parents at the beginning of the day. He met with pupils informally during the school day as well as a group of pupils. The inspector visited eight lessons jointly with the headteacher. During these visits, the inspector looked at pupils' work and spoke with pupils to evaluate the quality of their learning. He also examined their work in a sample of pupils' books with the headteacher. The inspector scrutinised a variety of documents relating to safeguarding, behaviour, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, pupils' attainment and progress, staff performance and leaders' plans for improvement. He considered the 58 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. The inspector assessed the impact on standards of leaders' actions taken since the last inspection as well as additional lines of enquiry.