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Mrs Sarah Hearnshaw
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Dear Mrs Hearnshaw

Short inspection of Shortbrook Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 26 June 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 March 2014.

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 led your team with quiet determination to make sure teaching is of a high quality and pupils, including those who have a special educational need (SEN) and/or disability, are making strong progress in improving their reading, writing and mathematics skills. Teachers and teaching assistants are skilfully bringing out the best in pupils. You and your capable deputy headteacher have guided the school to agree a set of values. Consequently, parents, carers and pupils are very supportive of the school and staff morale is high.

One of your most notable achievements is that you and other leaders have established a calm and purposeful atmosphere in which pupils thrive. Many pupils face significant difficulties in their lives but, with the school's help, they are successful in overcoming those barriers to make good progress. Pupils who have identified behaviour difficulties develop successful ways of improving their behaviour. You and your team have also been successful in reducing the number of pupils who are persistently absent. You use a 'walking bus' to support families facing difficult circumstances in getting pupils to school. As a result, the number of pupils who are persistently absent and the number of fixed-term exclusions are reducing.

You have led the school effectively to review the curriculum. Pupils are motivated by the content. Teachers and leaders have made sure that learning is finely tailored to pupils' needs. Teachers support pupils to explore themes and issues raised in classic

novels through a range of subjects. Because of this careful work, pupils are enthused, enjoy their learning and they are developing a rich vocabulary and secure general knowledge. Pupils' understanding of key concepts and skills, such as investigation, are developed well in mathematics and science. However, pupils' progress in developing these skills in other subjects are not as strong.

At the time of the previous inspection, the school was asked to make sure that pupils applied the skills that they learned in reading, writing and mathematics to other subjects. You and your team have been successful in raising teachers' and pupils' expectations about the quality of work that pupils do in topic and science. You acknowledge that there is further work to do to make sure that teachers' expectations continue to rise. Pupils' handwriting and presentation skills are of a high quality when they produce their best work, but they do not adopt these high standards for all their work.

Subject leaders are developing their roles well. They take responsibility for offering other teachers guidance about subject knowledge and highlighting the best practice. They look at the quality of work in pupils' books and intervene when necessary. Subject leaders track pupils' progress carefully and use the information to inform their plans. Some subject leaders have developed stronger skills than others.

You have ensured that children in the early years develop strong communication skills. Most children enter Nursery with skills and abilities below those typical for their age. Staff are skilled in introducing them to new vocabulary through a story-based approach. As a result, children are confident to talk as they play and use new words. However, the outside area is under-developed and opportunities to consolidate children's learning are not fully exploited. The opportunities and equipment for writing lack imagination and flair.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You and your leaders are committed to making sure that each pupil is safe and healthy. It is one of the school's values and staying safe and healthy is top of the agenda. As a result, the safeguarding culture in the school is strong. Leaders have made sure that safeguarding systems, policies and processes are effective and reviewed regularly. You and your team maintain a systematic overview of referrals and support so that you have an impressive knowledge of vulnerable pupils and their families. Your team make best use of external agencies to get the right support for pupils. They make sure referrals and any subsequent follow up is done in a timely fashion and recorded securely.

Staff are confident about spotting the signs and symptoms that might indicate a pupil is at risk. They know how and who to report to when they have concerns. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe from a variety of risks. The new curriculum is also effective in helping pupils develop safe behaviours.

Inspection findings

- Teachers are successfully using the new curriculum to find different ways of enthusing pupils. Pupils, especially boys, are motivated by reading novels such as 'Beowulf' to improve their reading and writing skills. When we looked at pupils' books, we noted boys using evocative language in their stories to create an air of mystery and menace. Pupils of all abilities can write for a variety of purposes. By the time pupils reach the end of Year 6, they are confident and fluent writers. Other subjects and a range of clubs and sports teams add an exciting element to the curriculum.
- Pupils know the school values, and the curriculum is designed to support them in understanding and adopting these values. As we visited lessons, we noticed how willing pupils were to help each other and adopt a teamwork approach. Teaching assistants worked effectively with pupils, patiently supporting the least able to arrive at logical conclusions. We observed pupils developing confident skills in investigating mathematics problems and offering reasons for their answers. However, the same skills are not being developed as strongly in other subjects.
- When we looked at pupils' work we could see that the quality of pupils' writing is consistently strong across a variety of subjects, demonstrating the value that they place on subjects such as science and, particularly, art. Pupils' best work is displayed regularly and their handwriting and presentation is of a high quality. However, pupils' handwriting and their presentation of graphs and diagrams in their books show less care and attention.
- Children in the early years are developing confident speaking and listening skills because adults are skilled in supporting them to use new words. For example, as a child played with models of animals, an adult helped her to identify the features that were the 'same' and which were 'different'. The child was then able to describe similarities and differences of other animals. However, the opportunities for children to develop their writing skills are not as strong. The early years base provides a sound environment for learning, but we agreed more could be done to provide a more stimulating space. The outdoor area does not offer sufficient support for children to consolidate their learning.
- Pupils, including those who have SEN and/or disabilities, are developing confident reading skills. When I heard pupils read, the Year 6 reading ambassadors helped Year 3 readers to use their phonics skills to sound out unfamiliar words. The ambassadors told me how much they and their friends love reading. They are encouraged to read widely and often. Pupils frequently use the well-stocked reading corners around the school.
- Governors are effective in supporting and challenging you and other leaders to make sure the pupil premium funding is used effectively. You have used the money wisely to fund a range of interventions matched to individual pupils' needs. As a result, disadvantaged pupils are making better progress, and any differences between their performance and their peers is rapidly evening out. Leaders have also used the funding effectively to support pupils with identified behaviour difficulties and those who do not attend school frequently enough. However, despite these reductions and the best efforts of the school, the

numbers of pupils who are excluded or are persistently absent remain above the national averages.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- children in the early years have more varied opportunities for writing, and that the outside area is used more effectively to support their learning
- the success of the new curriculum is used effectively to ensure that pupils have more opportunities to develop their reasoning and investigation skills across all subjects
- pupils improve their handwriting and presentation skills
- the number of pupils who are excluded or are persistently absent continues to fall.

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

Yours sincerely

Joan Hewitt
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and other senior and middle leaders and three members of the governing body. I met with a representative of the local authority. I visited lessons with you and the deputy headteacher, looked at pupils' work with leaders and spoke informally with pupils. I heard six pupils read. I looked at the results from Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and considered 13 responses, including seven written comments. I evaluated the responses of 13 staff and 20 pupils to Ofsted's surveys. I also took account of the school's own surveys of parents' and pupils' views. I examined a range of documents, including information about safeguarding, the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan.