

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
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Mrs Jill Gardner  
Executive Headteacher  
Denton Primary School  
Vicarage Lane  
Denton  
Northamptonshire  
NN7 1DT

Dear Mrs Gardner

### **Short inspection of Denton Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 3 February 2016, 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 2011.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

You, the staff and governors have maintained the good quality of education provided by the school since the last inspection. Since you joined the school as executive headteacher in September 2013, you have brought about important improvements to pupils' behaviour, the quality of teaching and the school environment. The pupils, staff and parents I spoke with all recognised the positive impact of your work to build on the strengths identified at the previous inspection.

As a result, Denton continues to be a school where pupils feel very well cared for, make good progress and enjoy learning. Pupils, parents and staff are rightly very proud of their school. One parent, typifying the views of many others, commented, 'Denton is a caring and wonderful school. The headteacher and staff are approachable and kind. They listen to any concerns we have and act upon them immediately. We are lucky that our children go to such a well-led, vibrant school.'

Pupils' achievement continues to be good and has improved significantly in the early years and in Key Stage 1. The Nursery provision, opened in September 2014, is well led and is enabling children to get off to a good start before they begin the Reception Year. Pupils' achievement by the end of Key Stage 2, while in line with the national picture, has not improved as much. At the last section 5 inspection, inspectors asked the school to raise the achievement of the most-able pupils in writing and mathematics. The actions taken have proved very successful in writing but less so in mathematics, where pupils make the progress expected but too few

make accelerated progress. Last year, all pupils made the progress expected in reading by the end of Key Stage 2.

The good standards of teaching reported at the time of the last inspection have been maintained. Teachers know their pupils well and usually provide work that is appropriate to their needs. Teachers work effectively with the teaching assistants to ensure that all pupils make the progress over time that they should. You know that some teaching, particularly in mathematics, is occasionally not as strong as it should be and you continue to support and challenge staff if lessons are ever not effective enough in securing good progress.

Your work to support disadvantaged pupils is strong. Governors have conducted their own review of the way the school spends the funding made available to it specifically to improve the achievement of disadvantaged pupils (pupil premium funding). They have ensured that the school is following best practice and that these pupils are making the progress that they should. Work to improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils in order to ensure that it matches the high attendance of other pupils in the school is proving successful.

The curriculum provides pupils with rich opportunities for exciting learning and promotes their strong personal development. Pupils enjoy the themed, 'topic-based' approach to learning, which is enhanced through classrooms that are organised to be stimulating and inspiring. A good example of this is the mixed-age Year 5 and Year 6 classroom with its 'Space Investigation Centre'. Here, models of the solar system are accompanied by a good range of books, images and stimulating questions such as 'Does space ever end?' and 'Why are some stars brighter than others?' You are, rightly, currently auditing the curriculum in the foundation subjects to ensure that they give sufficient coverage to all subjects.

Strategies to promote fundamental British values are strong. Pupils benefit from visits to the school by leaders of different faith communities. They are also well informed about democracy, for example through the 'pupil parliament' and from visits to the school from a local councillor and the constituency member of parliament.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Policies regarding safeguarding are subject to regular review and the effectiveness of the school's child protection arrangements is closely monitored by governors. Your commitment to ensuring that the school's arrangements are as effective as they can be is reflected by your commissioning of an external audit of safeguarding last year. You acted quickly to make the improvements suggested by the external reviewer. Staff are well trained; in discussions, those I spoke to could describe confidently the actions they would take if ever they had any concerns about a child's welfare. All of the children I spoke with during the inspection reported that they feel very safe when they're at school.

## Inspection findings

- Your good leadership is making a strong contribution to the quality of education provided by the school. On joining the school, you identified some weaknesses in teaching and other aspects of the school and took on board the findings of a local authority review to bring about important improvements. As a result, three teachers were given enhanced professional development through an 'improving teaching' programme.
- The school's judgements about the quality of teaching and how it can be improved are accurate. Appropriate action is being taken to strengthen teaching where it was seen to be less strong.
- The work to tackle the areas for improvement identified at the previous section 5 inspection have proved effective, particularly in bringing about improvements to the quality of teachers' marking and in providing greater challenge for more-able pupils in writing. As a result, pupils' writing skills are improving and more are achieving higher standards at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2.
- Improvements in mathematics have proved harder to achieve, though teachers are increasingly confident in responding to the greater challenges provided by the revised national curriculum for mathematics. The teaching of mathematics is improving through the good support teachers are receiving from an external mathematics consultant.
- The school development plan identifies the right priorities for improvement and makes clear who is responsible for leading the initiative and the resources required. The plan is regularly reviewed but would be strengthened if clear interim milestones were set to enable governors to monitor the impact of the plan's implementation more strategically.
- Systems to monitor the quality of teaching and pupils' progress are effective but could be stronger. You and your staff regularly monitor pupils' progress and achievement through the six-weekly checks on reading, writing and mathematics. However, the findings of this monitoring are not revisited strategically enough by senior leaders to ensure that any specific weaknesses identified in teaching and pupils' achievement are systematically revisited to check that they have been tackled.
- Following the recent changes to the assessment requirements of the national curriculum, you have devised an effective and coherent system to assess pupils' achievement in English and mathematics. The teachers I met with were able to describe how this had strengthened their understanding of pupils' progression, including in mathematics. Nevertheless, not all teachers use this good assessment information they now hold to plan learning in mathematics that fully meets the needs of all groups of pupils.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and at playtime. The teachers and pupils I spoke with all said how much behaviour has improved under your leadership. Pupils said that lessons are rarely affected by poor behaviour.

- Pupils understand the importance of being kind and courteous to each other. In discussions, the pupils I spoke with said there now was 'virtually never' any bullying under your leadership. The school's records confirm this to be the case.
- The quality of provision in the early years has improved strongly since the last inspection. With good support from a strong early years leader from another school, your talented, enthusiastic and inspiring leader for the early years had made key changes to bring about improvements. The quality of tracking and assessment in the early years is strong and children's gains are accurately and regularly recorded in their learning journals. Teachers' planning in the early years builds well on this assessment so that any gaps in children's knowledge, skills and understanding are quickly tackled. The introduction of nursery provision is also enabling the early years leader to ensure that children get off to a flying start in the Reception Year. This helps explain why children's skills in number, reading and writing have improved significantly by the time they enter Year 1.
- The quality of the governance of the school has improved since the last inspection. Governors recently reviewed their arrangements for monitoring the school's work. This has resulted in clearer lines of responsibility, with individual governors responsible for monitoring the aspects of the school that best match their individual strengths following an audit of governors' skills. Governor oversight of the school's finances and safeguarding arrangements is very effective. Governors are not complacent. As one said to me during our discussions, 'we keep a strong eye on pupils' progress to make sure our children get the very best they deserve.'
- You have made excellent use of the additional funding provided through the PE and sports premium to raise attainment and participation in sport. Pupils benefit from a good range of additional activities at lunchtime, led by the play leader, and the school's sports teams have enjoyed greater success over time in competitions and tournaments involving other local schools.
- The school is, rightly, well regarded by the local community. Parents are highly supportive of the school. Those I met with reported that they appreciate the school's caring ethos and how approachable you and your staff are. They also commented very favourably on the frequency and quality of information they receive. The 28 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, and the results from your own surveys of parents' views paint a similarly positive picture. All of the 28 respondents to Parent View indicated that they would recommend the school and all agreed or strongly agreed that the school is well led and managed.
- The parents of children who have special educational needs or a disability are particularly positive about the support their children have received from school staff.

## **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- the monitoring of teaching and pupils' work is more effective by making sure that any weaknesses identified are regularly followed up to make sure that they have been remedied
- all teachers use the improved assessment information they hold about pupils' attainment and progress consistently to plan learning which meets the needs of all groups of pupils, particularly in mathematics
- the school development plan includes interim milestones to enable governors to monitor the impact of the plan's implementation.

Yours sincerely

Daniel Burton  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, other staff and representatives of the governing body and a group of pupils from Key Stage 2. I also spoke with pupils informally in the playground at breaktime and in lessons. Together, we observed teaching in every class. I considered the 28 responses to Parent View as well as comments received from 23 parents through the Parent View freetext facility and an email I received directly from a parent. I looked at the school's own records of parents' views and spoke with parents at the start of the day as they dropped their children off at school. I also considered the views of staff and pupils who completed Ofsted surveys during the inspection. I scrutinised a range of documentation, including records of pupils' progress, attainment and attendance, the school's self-evaluation and development plan and the school's records of the monitoring of teaching. I also scrutinised the single central record, the school's safeguarding policy and records of staff training.