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Mrs Cathryn Downing
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Downing

Short inspection of Stamford Park Junior School

Following my visit to the school on 8 March 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 November 2010.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. For each of the last five years, the attainment of 11-year-old pupils has been significantly better than the average across the country. Under your determined leadership, staff and pupils continue to work hard to reach the highest standards.

In response to the previous inspection report, you have improved the systems for checking on the quality of teaching and learning in the school. You and your senior leaders regularly visit lessons and examine a range of children's work to identify where teaching is effective and where improvements need to be made. You give teachers clear feedback and, where necessary, provide specific support to enable them to improve particular aspects of their work. This includes working with and observing highly effective teachers in other schools. Your records show that this has had a positive impact on the quality of teaching in the school.

You place considerable emphasis on providing support and training to help staff develop their leadership skills, to prepare them for the next stage of their careers and to induct them into new roles. For example, your recently appointed special educational needs coordinator has attended a range of courses relevant to her new responsibilities. Your newly appointed deputy headteacher is pursuing the National Professional Qualification for Headship.

As part of this approach to career development, you have given each teacher responsibility for a particular subject and provided training and support in planning, monitoring and resource management. Subject leaders also deliver training to help their colleagues build their confidence and extend their expertise. As a result, all subjects in the curriculum have full coverage. Staff morale is also high, as the responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire show.

The previous inspection report identified the need to improve communication with parents. You have made a number of changes in response to this. For example, you have introduced a new reporting system to provide parents with feedback on their children's attainment and progress at five points during the year. This has been well received. Pupils in Years 4 and 5 have blogs to provide their parents with daily updates on what they are doing in school. This system will eventually be extended to all year groups. You and the house captains send out half-termly newsletters to parents. In addition, the website includes a weekly calendar of events. You have monitored the impact of these developments through questionnaires to parents. The responses to the January 2016 survey show that the great majority of parents are positive about the school. This was also the case with the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire and the statements made to me by the parents whom I met. However, as at the time of the last inspection, there is still a significant minority of parents who are not satisfied with the communication between the school and home.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have appropriate systems for checking on the suitability of staff to work with children. The school's safeguarding policy is very detailed and covers all the required areas, including dealing with suspected cases of female genital mutilation and forced marriage, as well as combating racism. Very recently, you attended training on these last two issues and are disseminating this information to your staff. Your work on safeguarding is further supported by helpful policies on anti-bullying, e-safety and dealing with violence and aggression.

The pupils whom I met said that some bullying happened in the school but this was dealt with appropriately. Last term, you extended the annual anti-bullying week to include a focus on raising awareness of hate crime across the world. This built on the work that you have done on combatting homophobic bullying and the use of derogatory comments. The pupils who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire agreed that teachers encouraged them to be friendly to each other. They also said that they felt safe at school, as did those to whom I spoke.

You have clear systems for identifying pupils who are potentially vulnerable and you and your staff work very closely with the relevant agencies to support those pupils and their families. The provision of child and adolescent mental health services on site is an important aspect of this.

Inspection findings

- By analysing results and information on pupils' progress, as well as through observing lessons and examining books, you and your leadership team have built up a clear picture of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. As a result, your self-evaluation is accurate and your priorities for development are the right ones.
- Last year, the attendance of pupils with special educational needs was much lower than the national average. You and your colleagues have conducted a detailed examination of the reasons for this and are working hard to improve the situation. As a result, the attendance of these pupils so far this year is much higher than at this point last year. Their attendance is in line with, or above, the average attendance of all pupils at the school. The recently appointed special educational needs coordinator has conducted a detailed review of provision within the school and produced a clear plan for development. This includes examining ways of ensuring that pupils with statements of educational needs develop greater independence in their learning. The coordinator has also conducted a detailed scrutiny of books to identify those pupils who are not making enough progress and has arranged for them to have additional help, carefully matched to their particular needs. For several pupils, this includes further work on phonics (the sounds that letters make) in order to improve their reading. Your records show encouraging signs of improvement as a result.
- At the end of the last academic year, the results in writing for 11-year-olds were above the national average. However, the amount of progress that they had made since the time that they left the infant school was well below average. The improvement of writing is now a major focus of development for the school. Under the strong leadership of the deputy headteacher, an audit has been conducted of teachers' knowledge and, in every staff meeting, training is provided on grammar, spelling and punctuation. Staff have also received training in how to present pupils with good examples of writing on which they can base their own work. Last term, you introduced a new assessment system to help staff identify precisely where pupils are underperforming, so that they can receive additional help suited to their particular needs. Pupils receive daily grammar and punctuation lessons and twice-weekly spelling lessons. They also have access to additional classes at the beginning of the day, in order to increase their progress in English. In a lesson that I visited, the pupils were working on improving a piece of writing by using specific grammatical devices. They did this with great enthusiasm and concentration. They had a firm command of the technical terminology and succeeded in making the original piece of writing far more lively, vivid and interesting. In addition to the work in class, you are extending pupils' experiences of writing by giving them the opportunity to work with published authors and poets. As a result of such work, one of your pupils recently won first prize in a national poetry competition.
- The school's curriculum covers all the required subjects and makes good use of the wide range of expertise among the staff. Work in class is further

enriched through a range of additional activities, including residential visits, instrumental lessons, theatre trips and workshops on historical themes. This term, for example, Year 3 will visit Chester, as part of their study of Roman Britain.

- The school has made good use of the primary physical education and sports funding. Over the year, lessons cover athletics, cricket, dancing, gymnastics, football, lacrosse, netball, orienteering and tennis. Through morning and after-school clubs, pupils have the opportunity to take part in a wide range of further activities, including basketball, cheerleading, dodgeball, golf and touch rugby. Many compete in local tournaments. For three years in succession, the school has achieved the Sports England Sportsmark Gold Award.
- Pupils have considerable opportunities to develop their leadership skills, for example by acting as house and team captains and through membership of the eco council. Currently, the school holds the ECO Schools Silver Award. It also holds the British Council International Award and has close links with a school in Kenya which it supports through charitable work. French is taught throughout the school. Through the language clubs, pupils can also learn Russian, Czech and German. You are keen to develop pupils' entrepreneurial skills. So far, this has involved their taking responsibility for organising the Christmas Fair, where they had practical experience of financial planning. With an external provider, you are working to extend such work further. The wide and varied range of activities provided for pupils reflects the strong commitment that you and your staff have to ensuring that every pupil has the opportunity to excel at something and, by doing so, to gain a sense of success, confidence and fulfilment.
- In the lessons observed, the pupils worked with a high level of concentration and enthusiasm. They arrived promptly, organised themselves well and moved very quickly, and without fuss, from one activity to another. Pupils also behaved well around the school and related well to each other and to adults. They are polite, articulate, interested and hardworking and clearly enjoy the rich range of opportunities provided for them.
- The governors take a close interest in the school. They know it well and have a clear understanding of where its strengths lie and where further improvement is needed. They have been helped in this by the regular reports that you and your staff provide for them. Governors have allocated the pupil premium funding to an appropriate range of activities to support disadvantaged pupils. Although a clear plan has been produced for the current year, it has not been included on the school's website. Reports on previous years include information on the impact of pupil premium expenditure. However, this is not set against specific targets. Therefore, it is not possible to determine precisely what the school's intentions were and to what extent they were realised.
- You have extended the school's website to include a learning platform where pupils can upload their work or be guided to relevant resources and sites which can help them research particular topics. This facility is being used by some pupils and their families but not as regularly or as widely as you had

hoped. At present, the website does not comply with requirements. It does not include information on the percentage of pupils who made or exceeded expected progress last year. The record of governors' attendance at meetings and the plan for the use of pupil premium funding in 2015–16 are also missing. The section on policies includes earlier as well as current versions of some documents. This is confusing for anyone seeking information on the school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- there is a renewed focus on ensuring that parents feel well informed about the school
- the website is up-to-date and includes all the required information about the school
- the plans for the use of the pupil premium funding include clear targets and measures for assessing the impact of expenditure.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Aelwyn Pugh
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, the deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher. I also met middle leaders, a representative from the local authority and nine governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body. I looked at books and observed lessons, spoke to pupils in classrooms and held a meeting with eight pupils, chosen at random from Years 3 to 6. At the beginning of the day, I spoke to the parents of 15 pupils from across the four year groups. During discussions, I examined a range of documentation relating to pupils' progress and safeguarding. I considered the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaires for staff, pupils and parents. I looked at displays in the classrooms and in corridors and spoke to a range of staff in and around the school.