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Miss Joanne Patterson  
Headteacher  
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Cheshire  
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Dear Miss Patterson

### **Short inspection of Navigation Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 19 April 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 February 2011.

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

You and the leadership team have maintained the good quality of education since the last inspection. Reflecting the vast majority of parents' views, one comment on Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, said, 'Navigation is a great school with a real friendly, community feel.' Pupils I observed during the inspection mixed and worked well together regardless of gender, ability or ethnicity. Leaders at all levels have communicated and built this culture and ethos over the last few years and have been successful in the school being inclusive of all pupils regardless of background or ability. You, the governors and other leaders, have high expectations for pupils and are determined that pupils should have the skills for the future so that they 'can be what they want to be'. There is also a successful focus on developing pupils into being good citizens locally, regionally, nationally and internationally.

At the previous inspection, the school was asked to improve the quality of writing in key stage 1 and to improve assessment so that teachers challenge pupils to attain higher standards. Pupils' standards in writing, at the end of Year 2, have risen in four out of the last five years. Their sentence structure is increasingly sophisticated, using different sentence openers and a range of structures in sentences such as adverbial phrases. They use time connectives and other types of conjunction in their work, and a range of adverbs and adjectives that make their writing more precise and descriptive. On display around the school and in pupils' books, it is clear that there are more opportunities for pupils to write at length in other subjects, particularly history and geography. You have already identified in your school improvement plans

that there is still some work to do to increase the proportion of key stage 1 pupils exceeding the expectations for their age in writing, particularly in spelling.

You have changed the system of assessment. Teachers plan lessons that are based much more on what pupils need to learn next. The assessments identify precisely the strengths in each pupil's skills and knowledge, and any gaps or lack of understanding. Teachers then build these into their next lessons. In mathematics, teachers pre-teach some aspects of the forthcoming topic, such as fractions, which pupils may find difficult because they have not yet been taught the content or they struggled to understand it previously. There is still some work to be done on assessment to clarify accurately children's starting points as they start school in the Nursery and Reception classes. The teachers assess thoroughly the pupils who are known to be disadvantaged. You now track this group of pupils' attainment, over the time they are in school, to measure whether the gap between this group of pupils and other pupils is closing.

There have also been other improvements since the previous inspection. There has been a three-year increase in pupils' attendance and a three-year decrease in persistent absence. Pupils' attainment by the end of Year 6 has improved steadily and has been well above the national average for the last four years.

You, and the relatively new leadership team and governing body, have an accurate evaluation of the school's strengths and areas for development. There is a track record of improvement including maintaining the strengths identified at the previous inspection and addressing all the weaknesses that you have identified. This constitutes a good capacity to improve further. There is still some work to do for the governing body to make sure that all the policies and information requirements for the website are met.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Child protection is high profile and a high priority throughout the school. Safeguarding is a regular standing item at staff meetings, briefings and at governors' meetings. Posters and information relating to different aspects of safeguarding are visible around the school. Adults who work with children have a thorough check of their backgrounds and ability to work with children. Adults have been well trained in how to identify some of the possible causes of abuse as well as more extreme risks to children, such as female genital mutilation and radicalisation.

Leaders work well with other agencies, schools and specialists to share information and to gather a well-informed full picture of the child and their family. Any bullying incidents are followed up well in senior leadership meetings and in team meetings for staff. Staff records of safeguarding and bullying incidents are detailed and precise. They make sure the school meets the national requirements for safeguarding children.

## Inspection findings

- The school has used one of the three nationally approved assessment systems to make a judgement about the children's knowledge and skills as they enter the early years. This system has not been helpful in enabling the school to make an accurate judgement about children's level of development. I would judge from evidence in books, from observing in lessons and from inspection reports of early years providers that children enter with the skills and knowledge that are typical for three- and four-year-olds. However, the assessment system identified many pupils to be less able on entry. As we discussed, the school should take advice from experts and specialists and come to a more rounded and accurate judgement about children's starting points.
- By the end of Reception in the last two years, a higher proportion of children than nationally attained a good level of development. They also attained higher than average in physical development, personal and social development, their understanding of the world, expressive arts and reading, writing and mathematics. Children's work indicated that early in spring they can write correctly demarcated sentences and spell words using their knowledge of phonics (the sounds that letters make). This constitutes good progress from their starting points.
- Pupils' ability to read words using phonics has been variable. In the Year 1 national phonics check, pupils attained well above average in 2014 but only average in 2015, many pupils sliding back from the end of Reception. Leaders have acted to rectify this by restructuring the way phonics is taught in key stage 1, to assess earlier and to intervene earlier if a pupil looks as though they are making slow progress. Early signs are that this has worked and pupils' phonics knowledge has improved.
- By the end of Year 6, pupils have attained standards that are well above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. The work to improve pupils' writing in key stage 1 has been effective and is working its way up the school. So by the end of Year 6, there has been a three-year increase in pupils' reading, writing and grammar, punctuation and spelling.
- As the number of pupils who are known to be disadvantaged is low, standards can fluctuate from year to year. There has been a three-year decline in progress in key stage 2 for this group of pupils. In some year groups, the attainment of this group is close to a year behind others nationally. Evidence from the school's own assessments and from a learning walk around school show also that this group is making good progress, particularly those who do not also have special educational needs or disability. Leaders are not able at present to show how the gap in attainment between this group and others is narrowing over their time in school.
- The impact and effectiveness of teaching are still good. Where they are more effective is when teachers monitor the class well and skilfully use targeted questions and feedback to pupils, enabling them to know what to do to improve their work. Similarly, some teachers ask probing questions which made pupils think, explain their reasoning and infer things about characters and texts. Pupils' books in Year 1, particularly since February, showed many

examples of sophisticated writing, well ahead of the standards expected for a Year 1 pupil.

- Most parents in their responses to Parent View and to the school's own questionnaire are full of praise for the school, its inclusivity and the work of the teachers in what they do for their children. There were a few negative responses mainly to do with a lack of communication, appropriateness of homework and bullying. The overwhelming majority agreed that pupils are safe, looked after, make good progress and teachers make them behave well. This positive return was also reflected in pupils' answers to the school's survey. They cited physical education, English, computing and mathematics as their favourite subjects but were less keen on music, French, science, history, geography and topic work. Pupils also agreed that behaviour is good and that they feel safe. In the online survey staff said overwhelmingly that they feel supported, are proud to teach at the school and have their training needs met.
- My observations around the school indicated that pupils worked well together regardless of gender, ability, background or ethnicity. They were keen to learn, and responded quickly and politely to adults. There are a few incidents raised by parents and recorded by the school of bullying and inappropriate name-calling, such as those based on hair colour, race or perceived sexuality. The school rightly takes these incidents seriously. They are investigated fully and are followed up at staff briefings and team meetings to make sure that the incidents are resolved and there is no continuation of the behaviour. Pupils who have difficulties in behaving are identified and very effective plans are put in place to manage and improve their behaviour.
- The governors I met are highly knowledgeable and have a very good oversight of the school's assessment information. They are fully involved in setting the vision for the school and quality assuring the information presented to them by school staff. There is no system in place to check on whether they are meeting their statutory duties. For example, the school does not comply with its duty to publish information about provision for special educational needs, there is no reference on the website to governors' attendance at meetings, and the child protection policy does not make reference to the welfare requirements in the early years. Governors have a good understanding of how the extra funding for disadvantaged pupils and for sport has been allocated and its impact.
- The school does not buy into all the local authority's services. Therefore the support from Trafford has been limited. This said, you commissioned an expert from the local authority to provide support, advice and guidance about how to improve teaching in key stage 1. This has had a very good impact on the quality of pupils' work. The external school improvement partner's report to the school is unhelpful as it is overgenerous and too focused on the classroom environment rather than teaching and pupils' learning.

## **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- a higher proportion of pupils in key stage 1 exceed the expectations for their age in writing
- all the information requirements for the website are met
- they track the attainment of pupils who are known to be disadvantaged to check that the gap between them and other pupils is closing
- they arrive at an accurate judgement about children's starting points as they enter the early years.

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. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Allan Torr  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

With you, I observed teaching in the early years and in key stage 1 and looked at some pupils' writing. I met with a range of staff including you and senior leaders. I met with three members of the governing body and also with a representative of the local authority. I considered the 31 responses from staff to Ofsted's online survey and 96 responses from parents. I also considered the school's own surveys of parents and of pupils.