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Paula Doleman
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Dear Mrs Doleman

Short inspection of Ripley Infant School

Following my visit to the school on 4 October 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 2011.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

You demonstrate ambition and determination in your leadership. Your school is in a process of change at present, including the absence of some of your senior team. It is to your credit that you have managed these changes well and maintained the quality of education at your school during this time. Your school is popular among parents who appreciate the care and welcome you provide.

Since the previous inspection, you have addressed the areas for improvement identified. Attendance is now consistently in line with or slightly above the national average for all pupils. Persistent absence is well below the national average. You have achieved this through determined challenge to requests for absence during term time. You have also been relentless in contacting and working with those families whose children dip below the expected percentage of attendance at your school. You work well with external agencies to ensure that your pupils are in school regularly and on time.

You have improved outcomes in mathematics. Since the previous inspection, attainment by the end of Year 2 in this subject has been above the national average. This achievement has been consistent for the last five years. You have achieved this through bringing about improvements in the quality of teaching

and through developing pupils' understanding of problem solving and investigation.

You have maintained and improved outcomes across both the early years and key stage 1 since the previous inspection. This is because you have continued to challenge your staff to raise their expectations of what your pupils can achieve. The most able pupils in your school do well. The proportion of the most able pupils who attain the higher standard in the key stage 1 assessments is above the unvalidated attainment for all pupils nationally in mathematics, reading and writing. This includes a high proportion of the most able disadvantaged pupils. The overall attainment of disadvantaged pupils in reading, writing and mathematics is closer to that of all pupils nationally than previously, demonstrating that the differences between their attainment and their peers are diminishing.

The proportion of children attaining a good level of development in the early years has been broadly in line with the national average for the last two years. However, the proportion attaining the early learning goals in reading and writing has been below that of other children nationally. You and the early years leader acted with resolve to address the identified weaknesses in early years outcomes. You have restructured the learning environment, both in the indoor and outdoor classrooms. You have also raised the expectations of the early years team and brought greater focus to the teaching of reading and writing. This has resulted in the improved outcomes for this key stage. The proportion of children achieving a good level of development in 2016 is well above the national average for 2015.

Pupils enjoy reading. Learning phonics is fun for pupils and they gain skills quickly. While listening to pupils read, I learned that your pupils have favourite authors, including Frank Lampard, David Walliams and Francesca Simon. A young pupil and I shared a joke in reading Francesca Simon's surname. He explained that if there were an 'e' at the end, the split diagraph would change the reading of the name. He was right. As he pronounced it, there was the confident smile of someone who knew his phonics well! It is clear you challenge the most able readers to read widely and often. In each year group, you have ensured that the choice of books available has increased to match the greater demand of the new national curriculum.

Although attainment in writing is at least in line with the 2016 key stage 1 unvalidated outcomes, it does not match the pupils' achievements in mathematics and reading. You have recognised this within your school development plan. Your analysis of the school's assessment information is detailed. This has identified that the attainment of middle-attaining disadvantaged boys is not in line with age-related expectations in writing. Your plans to raise their attainment are appropriate and timely.

You have had challenges recently with the school website. The original website closed unexpectedly in circumstances beyond your control. The current website is not complete and, therefore, does not contain the required information, for

example, in relation to special educational needs and the financial and business interests of your governing body.

The governing body visits the school regularly to check the quality of learning. It has a good understanding of the quality of teaching and its impact on learning. Governors use the school's assessment information to challenge school leaders. For example, governors challenged the headteacher to address the differences between the outcomes in writing between the most able disadvantaged pupils and middle-ability disadvantaged pupils.

Safeguarding is effective.

The safety of your pupils is threaded throughout your curriculum and management systems in school. You have developed effective relationships with your local children's centre. You work together well to identify and support families of potentially vulnerable pupils. You share the responsibility of attending meetings and putting assistance in place when needed. You take seriously your responsibility to ensure that every pupil on roll is in school regularly. You are tenacious in ensuring that any pupil absence is carefully tracked and their safety assured.

The curriculum provides pupils with a variety of opportunities to learn about different faiths and the diversity of life in Britain. You and the governing body recognise the importance of this in order to broaden pupils' understanding. You are committed to supporting pupils to enjoy and learn about the views, lifestyles and beliefs of others.

As leaders, you and the governing body ensure that staff are trained appropriately to keep pupils safe from harm. You take appropriate and timely action to keep pupils safe. Your records of the major decisions you take in relation to safeguarding are informative. However, in some cases, you do not record all your actions, such as telephone conversations and, therefore, key decisions made to benefit your pupils are not part of the chronology within your files. The governing body monitor the actions you take to keep pupils safe. Governors understand the necessity of making the appropriate checks before allowing adults access to pupils, for example. However, their actions are not systematic. The governing body does not have a strategic view of the effectiveness of safeguarding overall.

Inspection findings

- The very youngest children settle into school very quickly, find new friends and attach well to their key adults in the early years. During the inspection, children in the early years were seen to be relaxed and happily learning alongside their peers. Children develop the key skills needed to get the most out of the variety of experiences on offer, both indoors and outside. On entry, children come into school with skills and attributes that are broadly in line with age-related expectations. Their reading and writing skills are not as well

developed as other areas of the curriculum on entry. Children catch up quickly in reading and writing and make good progress in learning across all the early learning goals.

- Leaders build well on the skills children gain in the early years. Pupils develop good phonics skills. The proportion of pupils attaining the expected outcome in the phonics screening test has improved year on year. In 2016, a greater proportion of pupils achieved the standard than in 2015. The vast majority of pupils achieve the standard by the time they leave Year 2. This compares well with the unvalidated national average for 2016.
- In 2015, boys did not achieve as well as girls in mathematics, reading and writing in the statutory assessments in Year 2. School leaders acted with urgency to intervene and their actions proved effective. In the key stage 1 2016 tests, boys attained as well as girls in both the expected standard and at the higher standard.
- Outcomes in mathematics, reading and writing have been consistently in line with the national average or slightly above for the last five years. This would seem to suggest school leaders have not made any significant improvements over time. However, it is clear from the current assessment data that leaders have addressed the changes in the expectation within the national curriculum well. Leaders have maintained the good outcomes at the expected and the higher standard. This demonstrates good progress in learning from starting points in Year 1. It also demonstrates leaders' knowledge of the deeper understanding required for pupils to reach age-related expectations by the end of Year 2.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school. The wider curriculum provides pupils with many opportunities to learn about key moments in history, for example. As well as in English and mathematics, pupils make good progress in other subjects of the curriculum. The wide variety of before- and after-school activities gives many pupils greater opportunities to develop skills in, for example, physical education and dance.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils' attainment in writing improves, so that it matches that of reading and mathematics, particularly for middle-attaining disadvantaged boys
- leaders record every action taken to secure the safety and well-being of pupils, and the governing body develops a strategic overview of the effectiveness of safeguarding in the school
- the school's website contains all the specified information required by the Department for Education.

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

Yours sincerely

Jan Connor

Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and the acting deputy headteacher. I spoke with the chair and another member of the governing body. I also met with a local authority representative. I toured the school, visiting all the classrooms to observe teaching, to speak with pupils and to look at the work in their books. I observed pupils' behaviour, both in class and around the school. I listened to a group of the most able and the less able readers. I considered a range of school documentation, including assessment information, the school's improvement plan and self-evaluation documents. I took into account the 20 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the 12 free text responses from parents. I took into account the 14 staff and four pupil responses to Ofsted's online questionnaires. I checked the single central record of recruitment checks and other documentation relating to safeguarding.

During the inspection I considered these key lines of enquiry:

- Are school leaders improving the outcomes of boys in reading and writing in both early years and key stage 1?
- Are early years leaders ensuring that all children make accelerated progress so that they catch up with their peers nationally, particularly in reading and writing?
- Is this school a coasting school, as data suggests outcomes have not improved over the last 5 years? What are leaders doing to change this?