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Dear Mrs Jackson

Short inspection of Hathersage St Michael's CofE (Aided) Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 5 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 January 2012.

This school continues to be good.

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

This is a school that enacts its core values, 'Learning, Laughing, Living', every day and in every way. Wherever I went during the inspection, pupils and staff were chatting, laughing and sharing learning together. Pupils and staff alike were pleased to show me what they were doing, reflecting a clear and shared sense of pride in this strong and cohesive school community. You are successfully creating a culture where all staff are working together with a shared vision to provide the very best for every pupil. As a result, pupils are ambitious, enthusiastic and confident learners.

Our visits to several classes provided good examples of this. In the Reception class, pupils were captivated by their 'Wild about Wednesday' session. They collected leaves, conkers and acorns and the teacher encouraged excellent language development through her narrative as they placed them in the autumn treasure basket. In Year 6, pupils were rising to the challenge of using colons and semi-colons correctly. The teacher used high-quality questioning to probe and develop pupils' understanding further. As a result, pupils were highly motivated and made good progress.

Areas for improvement from the previous inspection have been effectively tackled.

You were able to explain clearly to me the many strengths of the school, as well as the areas that still need to be developed. You and other senior leaders have evaluated the school accurately and have the capacity to make improvements successfully. You are rightly aspiring to become an outstanding school and are making strides in this direction.

The vast majority of parents express positive views about the school. They are extremely positive about the support that their children receive and the progress they are making. All the parents I spoke to praised the quality of your leadership, as well as the approachability and dedication of staff. Inspection evidence supports these positive views about the school.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding at the school which is woven through all aspects of the school's work. The single central record indicates that all required checks are made to ensure that staff are suitable to work with children. You ensure that staff receive the appropriate training, including training relating to protecting pupils from extremism and radicalisation. All the staff I spoke with understood the basic principles of child protection. As a result, they are vigilant and well aware of the actions they need to take if they think a child protection issue has arisen.

Pupils are taught effectively about everyday risks and how to manage these in a sensible way. Pupils said that they felt safe at school. They have a good understanding of online safety and are confident that any of the rare incidents of bullying would be dealt with quickly and effectively. The school's own records confirm this. The school places a strong emphasis on developing independence and resilience. This helps pupils to take responsibility for themselves and others and as a result, behaviour around the school and in lessons is extremely good.

Pupils' attendance is above the national average. You take swift action to follow up any concerns and work effectively with external agencies and the families to bring about rapid improvements.

Inspection findings

- You are providing excellent leadership through establishing an ethos of high expectations. Your vision is clearly understood by staff, pupils, parents and governors. As a result, pupils make good progress, behave well and thoroughly enjoy learning together.
- Leaders at all levels know the school inside out. Consequently, they know where further developments are needed but also know and celebrate the school's many successes. Among these are the pupils' participation and achievement in many different sports and musical activities.
- Governors are an enthusiastic and effective team who know the school well and provide appropriate support and challenge to you and your senior team. Their links with year groups as 'buddy governors' are excellent. This close contact with a cohort from Nursery to Year 6 provides each governor

with an in-depth knowledge about what is happening 'on the ground' in school. Governors' sharp focus on impact and meeting agreed targets ensures that they hold senior leaders rigorously to account.

- The leadership of the early years is highly effective. Since the previous inspection a concerted effort to improve the outdoor curriculum in the early years has resulted in more children making better progress. The proportion of children reaching a good level of development since 2014 has been consistently high and well above the national average. The classrooms and outdoor areas are magnets for learning. Children enjoy a wide range of purposeful tasks which seek to develop their basic skills of reading, writing and mathematics. Children persevere with activities because they are frequently based around children's interests. The school's ethos and values are firmly established in the early years. As a result, children understand how to play and work together happily and safely and show their mutual respect for each other.
- The quality of teaching seen during this inspection was securely good. Historic progress information, the school's evidence about pupils' progress and the work in pupils' books all confirm that this is the case.
- More pupils in Year 1 than in most schools typically achieve the expected standard in the phonics check. Reading is given a high profile across the school. Teachers provide well-planned reading sessions and regularly link texts to written activities. As a result, pupils are enthusiastic readers who are making good progress.
- Outcomes for pupils are good. The percentage of pupils working at the expected standard, or above, is greater than in other schools nationally. There are good levels of challenge for the most able pupils. For example, pupils in Years 6 relish the challenges they are presented with as they apply their mathematical understanding to real-life examples. As a result, the proportion of pupils exceeding national expectations in mathematics in recent years has been particularly high.
- There is a strong emphasis on providing a rich, active and creative curriculum which is finely balanced with striving for academic excellence. However, you have rightly identified that some subjects are not as well developed as you would like them to be. This is a priority for improvement this year. Your actions to develop subject leaders will help to drive this improvement. We agreed that as the curriculum develops, more could be done to challenge pupils in subjects other than English and mathematics.
- Learning outdoors is a notable feature of the school. All pupils enjoy learning outdoors, both in lesson time and during playtime. The school grounds have been creatively developed to encourage imagination, inspire adventure and build resilience and independence. Pupils told me that they thoroughly enjoy their 'Forest School' sessions, where they are given just the right amount of freedom to explore topics such as dry stone wall construction and building shelters in a well-supervised way.
- The school tracks the progress of individual pupils carefully and consequently any pupils who are identified as in danger of falling behind are provided with timely and effective support.

- You, your staff, pupils, governors and parents are rightly proud of the caring, respectful and nurturing culture, rooted in Christianity, which characterises the school. For example, older pupils keep a watchful eye on younger pupils, ensuring that they feel safe and secure in the playground. One pupil told me, 'We are a big happy family here.' Teachers successfully support pupils in becoming responsible citizens through understanding that the values and beliefs associated with their school are shared within British culture. Consequently, pupils understand the need to respect others, regardless of background, religion, belief or colour.
- All parents who responded to Parent View (Ofsted's online survey) said that their child is happy at school and would recommend the school to other parents. The school is well known within the local community, and beyond, for its strong family ethos and nurturing culture. As a result, the school has increased in size quite significantly since the previous inspection and some parents bring their children long distances to attend.
- The local authority provides the school with appropriate 'light touch' support because of the school's good academic performance and its confidence in leadership. The governing body particularly appreciates the strong relationship the school has established over time with the link adviser.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- subject leaders' skills are fully developed so that they can drive improvements in their areas of responsibility
- the level of challenge for all pupils of all abilities is securely embedded across the curriculum.

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

Yours sincerely

Dorothy Bathgate
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection I looked closely at specific aspects of the school's provision, including safeguarding arrangements, the quality of teaching and learning in key stage 1, the progress of pupils in subjects other than English and mathematics and the effectiveness of the school's actions to support pupils who are identified as falling behind.

I met with you and your senior leadership team, three subject leaders, seven governors, a group of pupils and a representative of the local authority. We observed four lessons together. I observed pupils' behaviour around the school, at breaktimes and during lessons. I met a number of parents informally at the beginning of the school day and considered the views of 56 parents posted on Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. I considered 23 staff and 43 pupil questionnaires. I evaluated a range of documents, including safeguarding records and policies.