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Mrs Cathy Clay
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Dear Mrs Clay

Short inspection of Derrymount School

Following my visit to the school on 18 October 2016 with Jo Ward, Ofsted Inspector, 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 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have ensured that the curriculum continues to meet the individual needs of pupils. All pupils receive opportunities to develop their communication and numeracy skills. Because of this, the majority of pupils make good progress in developing these skills, given their age, their stage of education and their learning needs. You have ensured that pupils in key stages 4 and 5 are able to explore subjects that interest them, or that they wish to pursue further when they leave the school. For example, pupils, particularly the most able, can study GCSE astronomy and A-level mathematics.

You have also ensured that the curriculum enables pupils to develop their social and emotional skills. This is a core focus of your school's provision. Pupils undertake regular trips to places such as the local supermarket, library and park, to develop their communication skills and practise their numeracy skills in real-life situations. Pupils also undergo independent travel training to enable them to learn how to use public transport. The curriculum offers pupils the opportunity to develop key life-skills, including how to cook. These many and varied opportunities ensure that your pupils are able to prepare themselves well for life in modern Britain.

At the previous inspection, you were asked to:

- improve pupils' achievement in reading and writing
- ensure that the less able received greater opportunities to make more rapid progress.

You have undertaken effective action to resolve these two areas for improvement.

You have introduced an increased focus on reading by introducing daily reading for all pupils. Consequently, pupils engage well with reading. Your staff also work more closely with pupils to develop their writing skills. You rightly recognise, however, that pupils require more opportunities to complete extended pieces of writing.

You have provided less-able pupils with greater opportunities to engage with practical activities to develop their communication and numeracy skills. Teachers provide these pupils with books that include illustrations, to enable them to engage with the text more effectively. You have also ensured that less-able pupils study real-life mathematical problems. This enables pupils to secure their mathematical understanding and recognise the value of developing their numeracy skills.

Since the previous inspection, the school has expanded to include a second site for pupils in Year 8 and above. This has enabled you to provide different facilities for the older pupils. It has also enabled you to meet pupils' needs more effectively, particularly in accommodating any anxieties they may have. However, this expansion has brought with it problems in ensuring continuity in pupils' learning across the two sites, particularly in English and mathematics. You have taken appropriate action to resolve this issue. For example, you have introduced regular joint meetings for staff from both sites. These meetings enable staff to share best practice. Furthermore, they enable subject leaders to check the quality of teaching and the progress pupils are making. You recognise that leaders must undertake further work to secure this development.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. Leaders who are responsible for safeguarding undertake timely and appropriate action where they have concerns about a pupil's welfare. They maintain regular communication with parents, and work closely with local agencies where it is necessary. Leaders undertake timely follow-up work to check on pupils' welfare.

All staff and governors have received comprehensive safeguarding training, including training related to child exploitation, child neglect, radicalisation and extremism, and female genital mutilation. Staff receive regular updates on the welfare of their pupils. They also receive further training on any issues that the safeguarding leaders have identified as affecting the school's pupils. All staff and governors are aware of the different types of abuse and the signs to look for. They understand the actions they should take where they have a concern about a pupil's

welfare, including the conduct of an adult towards a child.

The curriculum provides pupils with opportunities to learn how to be safe. They study how to be safe online, as well as how to stay safe in the community. Staff take pupils on trips to enable them to be more secure in ensuring their own safety in the local community. Pupils say that they feel safe at the school, and that they have someone they can speak to should they have any concerns.

Inspection findings

- Senior leaders, including governors, have an accurate view of the quality of the school's provision. Governors provide leaders with appropriate levels of support and challenge. They undertake their own checks to ensure that the information they receive from senior leaders is accurate.
- Governors complete regular checks of their own skills. Where they identify areas for development, they are quick to undertake relevant training.
- Governors have ensured that you, as the headteacher, receive support through an external consultant. This support includes providing you with opportunities to see best practice at other schools. This is helping you in fulfilling your role effectively.
- Staff have good relationships with pupils. They work closely with pupils to help them to develop their communication and numeracy skills and prepare for life in modern Britain. They also support pupils effectively to manage their behaviour and their relationships with other pupils.
- Upon arrival at the school, pupils undergo rigorous assessments in order to establish their level of ability and their learning needs. This enables leaders to ensure that pupils study an appropriate curriculum and receive the support they require to catch up where they have previously fallen behind.
- By teaching pupils in ability-based classes, teachers and teaching assistants are able to provide close support for all pupils, particularly the less able. Teachers are also able to provide effective challenge to the most able. This support enables most pupils to make good progress in developing their communication and numeracy skills, with some making rapid progress. The majority of pupils achieve the level expected of them, particularly in English and mathematics, given their age, their stage of education and their learning needs.
- Pupils of all abilities receive regular opportunities to read. Pupils can access books that are appropriate to their ability. While the most able pupils can read well, some of the less able struggle in reading words with which they are unfamiliar. To secure their reading skills, teachers have begun to teach phonics to the less able pupils. This approach is recent and therefore is not fully embedded.
- Senior leaders spend the pupil premium funding effectively on providing disadvantaged pupils with support to ensure that they attend school regularly and engage with their learning.

- The well-designed sixth-form provision meets the needs of its students. They receive close support from staff to complete their studies. They also undertake work experience to explore what they may wish to do when they leave school. Students appreciate the opportunities they receive while in the sixth form.
- Staff provide pupils and students with effective support as they prepare for their next steps once they leave the school. Due to this, very high proportions of pupils and students move on to appropriate places of education, training or employment.
- Senior leaders closely monitor pupils' behaviour. This enables pupils to receive further support where leaders have identified the need. As a result, pupils are able, over time, to regulate their own behaviour.
- Since the previous inspection, pupils' attendance has declined, and is now below the national average. Leaders have undertaken appropriate action to support those pupils who struggle to attend school regularly. You recognise that further work is necessary to ensure that attendance is in line with national levels.
- Pupils receive wide-ranging opportunities to improve their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, pupils are involved in charity activities. Such opportunities enable pupils to accept each other's learning needs. Some pupils, however, find it difficult to respect people who are different from them.
- Where appropriate, pupils receive their education off the school site. Senior leaders work closely with the organisations that offer these placements, monitoring pupils' attendance, safety and their behaviour. The organisations contribute to pupils' annual review of their education, health and care plan.
- The very large majority of parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, were very positive about the school. All who responded would recommend the school to other parents.
- Nearly all parents who expressed a view were positive about the progress their child has made, particularly in developing their social and emotional skills. As one parent wrote, the school gives its pupils 'a really good start in life and the ability to achieve things that they may not otherwise have been able to.'

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they develop further those strategies that have been successful in ensuring that the pupils who are regularly absent attend school much more frequently
- subject leaders secure consistency in the quality of teaching across both sites, so that pupils in all key stages continue to make good progress, particularly in developing their reading, writing and numeracy skills
- teachers further embed opportunities for all pupils to understand the need to respect people who are different from them.

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

Yours sincerely

Simon Hollingsworth
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, inspectors met with you, senior leaders, subject leaders, governors and members of staff. Inspectors carried out lesson observations in seven lessons across all key stages. I conducted one of these lesson observations with you, the headteacher. An inspector listened to pupils read. Inspectors met formally with pupils across all key stages. They observed pupils' behaviour before school and during breaktime and lunchtime. They took these opportunities to speak further with pupils. Inspectors took into account the views of the 14 parents who responded to Parent View, as well as the views of those parents an inspector met at the beginning of the school day. Inspectors also took into account the views of the six staff who responded to the questionnaire. Inspectors viewed a range of documentation, including information about achievement, curriculum, behaviour and attendance, safeguarding and the school's use of additional government funding. I checked the school's single central register. The key lines of enquiry for this inspection focused on:

- how far the curriculum across all key stages meets the needs of the pupils
- the effectiveness of the actions leaders have taken in response to the areas for improvement that the previous inspection identified
- how the school is ensuring that pupils make the progress they should in their learning, particularly in mathematics
- how effective the safeguarding arrangements are.