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Mrs Alison Castledine
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Dear Mrs Castledine

Short inspection of Newlands Junior School

Following my visit to the school on 1 December 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 September 2011.

This school continues to be good.

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

Since your appointment last year, your hard work and steadfast leadership have brought about the continued improvement of the school. You have a dedicated deputy headteacher, ambitious middle leaders and a team of committed staff who share your ambition and strive to achieve high standards across the school. The impact of this is most evident in the strong outcomes for writing and mathematics achieved in 2016, which are above national averages.

Governors, many of whom are new, have developed their respective roles since the last inspection. A methodical approach to monitoring and evaluating the work of the school has been adopted. This, together with an increased awareness of stakeholders' views, have strengthened the governors' knowledge of the school.

You and your governors have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas that still need to be developed. Your improvement plan is comprehensive and structured to ensure that the actions you take can be easily measured for the impact they make on pupils' achievement.

Where improvements have been less notable, you have taken crucial action to address them. This is particularly true for reading. One of this year's priorities in the school improvement plan clearly identifies the need to address the weaker performance in this subject and identifies how improved outcomes in reading will be brought about over time.

Senior leaders and middle leaders have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. This is demonstrated across the school in the high-quality teaching pupils receive, especially in mathematics. A new approach to the teaching of reading is already securing positive outcomes. Pupils said that they really enjoy how they are now learning about reading and how they feel that their use of vocabulary is being improved. The information being used by the school to track the impact of this new teaching programme is already indicating better pupils' progress.

The pupils take a pride in their school. 'It's great.' was a phrase used by the pupils to express how they felt. One pupil told me that 'You could not have a better school.' and other pupils agreed. Pupils believe that they belong to a community and behave in a manner that reflects this. Good and sometimes outstanding behaviour is standard. Pupils are polite and respectful to each other and visitors.

Areas for improvement, identified at the last inspection, have been mostly successfully tackled. Pupils' mathematics and writing attainments are now both above average. Pupils are being provided with more challenging work which is leading to better outcomes. However, attainment in reading has dipped over time and urgent action is now being taken by new leaders to bring teaching up to the same standard as in other core subjects. Pupils' cultural awareness and community cohesion have also been strengthened. A governor with community cohesion responsibility oversees this area of the school's work.

Despite the great success you have had in key areas of pupils' outcomes, you and other leaders in the school know that there is still work to be done. You recognise that approaches currently successfully being used in mathematics, to move pupils on to harder work more quickly, are not yet embedded in English lessons. Equally, you know that your new programme in reading will need to be reviewed and adapted to ensure that it provides the correct approach for all pupils in the school. Teachers have been given an increased responsibility for pupils' achievement. This has highlighted a need for senior leaders to maintain an overview of pupils' progress so that additional support can be provided in a timely manner.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your governing body have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You have rigorous arrangements and procedures in place to ensure that pupils are safe and secure in the school. These practices have helped to create a strong ethos of safeguarding. All potential staff are thoroughly vetted before they are offered employment at the school. Staff are kept up to date about safeguarding issues and are well informed on any issues of which they need to be aware.

Pupils are kept safe and are supported effectively through a strong working relationship between the school, external agencies and the local authority. Referrals are made in a suitable manner and concerns followed up appropriately. Records are accurately maintained. Pupils told me that they feel safe at the school. They know there is always someone they can talk with and are confident that they would be helped and supported. Pupils develop a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations through the school's curriculum. They have a good understanding of what bullying is and say that it is extremely rare in school. They also say that it is always addressed quickly and effectively when it does occur. The vast majority of parents and carers, through Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the school's own surveys, agree that their children are kept safe.

Inspection findings

- Leaders and governors have a detailed school improvement plan which is precisely linked to their accurate self-evaluation of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. This is being used to address any identified area of relative weakness, as well as to drive forward improvements in other areas of the school's work.
- Governors have actively stepped up the level of support and challenge they provide. This has helped to secure stronger outcomes in key subjects. Governors ensure that leaders check teachers' work so that rewards can be linked to the progress their pupils make. A review of staffing has enabled governors to appoint new staff and boost the teaching provision. This is being driven by governors' ambitions to improve the quality of teaching further and achieve even better outcomes for pupils.
- Senior and middle leaders are active in seeking advice and guidance from other providers. This approach is resulting in improved practices for all staff across the school. They also share their own expertise to help other providers improve.
- Subject leaders use a range of evidence to check the quality of teaching in their areas of responsibility. They analyse closely information available on individual pupils' learning and provide specific approaches to help pupils close any gaps in their knowledge, skills and understanding. This has been very successful in mathematics, and a literacy leader, appointed last year, is now replicating this effective practice in reading. A newly appointed leader responsible for the provision for disadvantaged pupils is providing an additional layer of support for disadvantaged pupils. This is helping to ensure that all disadvantaged pupils are making good progress, including those who are the most able in this group.
- Pupils' outcomes are good overall. Effective action taken by leaders, high-quality teaching and pupils' positive attitudes to their learning have secured progress and attainment above national averages in mathematics and writing. However, pupils' performance in reading has not made the same rate of improvement over time. New senior leaders have recently introduced a different approach to the teaching of reading. Staff have been trained to ensure that this is implemented consistently. Pupils speak positively about their improved learning in reading and how the subject is now making more sense to them. There is a sharp focus on

reading across the school. The readers I listened to all enjoyed reading and did so frequently, both at school and at home. All pupils read with abundant confidence. They were able to predict what would happen in their stories and talked to me about their favourite authors. The most able pupils wanted to read the same book again because of the enjoyment they had gained from reading it the first time. The least able pupils used phonic skills effectively when they tackled difficult words.

- Pupils' progress has been significantly accelerated over the last year. The school's tracking system indicates, for current pupils in the school, continued high standards in writing and mathematics. Better progress and attainment in reading are being achieved as leaders' actions to address the weaknesses are being successful. However, the new approaches have yet to be monitored and evaluated to ensure that they are effective in increasing the knowledge, understanding and skills of all ability groups.
- Leaders track the outcomes of different groups of pupils. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress. Historical differences in outcomes between boys and girls are less evident for current pupils in the school. Disadvantaged pupils have also made more rapid progress over the last year and differences between them and non-disadvantaged pupils are diminishing. Leaders have acknowledged that there is more work to be done in developing systems to track groups of pupils with different starting points.
- Pupils are keen to take part in tasks and benefit from a range of interesting and engaging activities. Teachers use their strong subject knowledge and adeptly structure learning to deepen pupils' vocabulary and comprehension skills. Challenging text is used to make pupils think and work hard to improve their reading. However, some pupils are still being asked to complete work that is insufficiently demanding before they move on to work that is more difficult. Teaching assistants provide a valuable resource for pupils who need additional support.
- Senior leaders are unwavering in their efforts to improve the attendance of all pupils, in particular for girls and for pupils who are disadvantaged. Records maintained by the school indicate an improvement in the number of pupils who are sustaining higher rates of attendance. A determined approach by leaders to reduce the number of pupils who are excluded from the school was effective last year. The school's relentless support for a few individual pupils who have more challenging behaviour is having a positive impact in this respect.
- From Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the school's own surveys of parents, it is evident that the vast majority of parents are happy with the support and education their children receive.
- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of specified information about charging and remissions on its website.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers consistently use assessment information accurately in English, as they do in mathematics, to match work to pupils' different starting points, so that the middle-ability and most-able pupils can move on to harder work more quickly
- the new teaching programme introduced to improve reading is reviewed and evaluated to make sure that good progress is maintained for all pupils
- as teachers are given an increased responsibility for the oversight of pupils' progress, leaders maintain an accurate and up-to-date view of how different groups of pupils are doing from their different starting points, so that they are able to provide additional support in a timely manner.

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

Vondra Mays
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, the deputy headteacher, middle leaders and other staff in the school. I had a discussion with the chair and vice-chair of the governing body. You and I made a series of visits to lessons. I listened to pupils read from Year 3 and Year 5. In addition, I held a discussion with a group of pupils from Year 5 and Year 6. I considered a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation, the school's improvement plan, records relating to pupils' attendance and exclusions, and information on outcomes for pupils. I also reviewed the school's safeguarding practices. I examined the school's website to check that it meets requirements on the publication of specified information. I also considered the views of 10 parents posted on Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including four free-text responses, as well as the school's own parental survey. I also visited your breakfast club.

This short inspection focused on whether:

- leaders were taking effective action to address the weaker outcomes in reading
- rates of attendance and the persistent absence of girls and disadvantaged pupils were improving
- fixed-term exclusions of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities were reducing
- safeguarding was effective and that pupils are kept safe.