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Mrs Emma Smith
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Dear Mrs Smith

Short inspection of Carlyle Nursery and Infant School

Following my visit to the school on 20 June 2017, 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 October 2011.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Your expectations for every pupil are reflected in the school's motto of 'Flying High'. Staff are proud to model the school's culture of success, and work collaboratively to ensure that children achieve well. As one member explained, 'The team works extremely closely together, is well motivated and all share the same values and vision for the school.'

The school is a positive learning environment where teaching is good in all year groups. As a result, children quickly settle in when they arrive into either the Nursery or Reception Years. They feel safe and behave very well, working hard and wanting to try their hardest. From a young age, they also cooperate happily and are keen to learn new things. Staff are skilled in promoting and modelling language, particularly for those children who are at early stages of learning English, asking good questions of pupils and checking their understanding. Staff also teach early phonics (letters and the sounds they represent) skills well.

The governing body is relatively new but is, nevertheless, fully effective. The skilled and confident chair ensures that he and his colleagues have trained quickly and have a good understanding of the school. Governors have also helped you to refine the school development plan so that it is even more precise. They visit you regularly to discuss all aspects of the school's provision, ask searching questions about pupils' achievements and are checking closely that the improvements are having the impact that you intend.

Leaders have addressed effectively the areas identified for improvement in the previous inspection report. The school's curriculum plans show that there are ample, regular opportunities to develop pupils' creative skills and make them confident users of information technology. Pupils confirmed that there are lots of lessons where they can write stories and poems, complete art and design activities and work with their tablet computers. Staff also give pupils overall helpful feedback on how to improve their work, on which pupils act. At the last inspection, it was also noted that attendance was not as high as it could be. The school website, prospectus and newsletters make the need for regular attendance clear to parents, and staff celebrate good attendance in assemblies and in wall displays. The governing body does not authorise term-time holidays, other than in exceptional circumstances. As a result of these measures, attendance has risen and is in line with the national average. Persistent absence is below the national average.

Until 2016, pupils left the school with overall levels of attainment that were above average. While, last year, the proportion of children who attained a good level of development when they left the Reception classes and the proportion who passed the phonics screening check in Year 1 were once again in line with the national average, attainment in Year 2 fell. Results showed that significantly lower proportions of pupils in this cohort achieved the expected standards, and those of a greater depth of understanding, in reading, writing and mathematics, compared to the national average. In many cases, it was in the lowest 10% of schools nationally.

Since your arrival as the acting headteacher in November 2016, you wasted no time in putting in place rapid, wide-ranging and effective action to address matters. You have enabled staff to have a programme of additional training to improve their effectiveness, as well as ensuring that senior leaders support well any teachers who are new to the profession or who are less confident. You have reallocated teaching assistants to different areas within the school, thus enhancing their impact. In addition, you have ensured that you have strengthened the responsibilities of subject leaders. These leaders visit classes to check the quality of teaching, monitor pupils' work and find out what pupils think about the tasks they are given. They then report their findings to you, so that you and the governing body can be confident that pupils are both happy with their learning and making effective progress.

As a result of the actions you have taken, good attainment for pupils in Year 2 has now been restored, while sustaining it in both the early years and Year 1. From my analysis of the school's assessment data and of pupils' work in their books and in lessons, it is possible to say that pupils overall are on target to leave the school in July with levels of skills that are at least in line with, and in many cases above, those expected for their age.

Both you and senior leaders are determined to address the remaining priorities for improvement quickly. You are replacing the online system for tracking the progress of children in the early years, because you judge that it is not meeting your needs. You have noted that not all pupils present their work as neatly as they should. In addition, although a clear majority of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have

special educational needs and/or disabilities are making at least good progress from their starting points, this is not yet the case for all.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and the staff are very clear that the protection of pupils is your highest priority. Staff were able to explain to me, at length and with great confidence, the indicators that might suggest a pupil is being harmed. They fully understand their responsibilities to report instantly any warning sign of abuse to either you or to one of the members of the safeguarding team. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Records are detailed and of high quality. These show that you make prompt referrals to external agencies for support where this is needed.

Pupils with whom I met during my visit explained how they and both their peers and their younger siblings felt very safe in school. They told me how any bullying and unkind behaviour were rare, and that they could talk to any member of staff if they were upset or worried. Pupils also explained to me how the school teaches them to keep safe online, as well as the dangers of electricity, deep water, roads and strangers.

Inspection findings

- Pupils' personal, social and health education is good. As a result, pupils know how to keep themselves healthy and are unafraid to make, and learn from, mistakes. Their very positive attitudes to learning make a considerable contribution to their readiness for junior school.
- While achievement in other year groups was sustained at a good level in the previous school year, outcomes in Year 2 declined sharply due to teaching for this cohort not being consistently good over time. As a result, staff were not able to demonstrate sufficient evidence of enough pupils achieving as well as they should. You acted swiftly to put a comprehensive package of measures in place to address this effectively and restore outcomes at the end of key stage 1.
- Information that you provided to me, which you check for accuracy by moderating pupils' work with a range of other local schools, shows that a very large majority of pupils in both key stages are making at least good progress, with around a quarter of these pupils making more than this. Good overall progress was confirmed in the large number of books I saw during my visit.
- Although many pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils in the school are making good and improving progress, this is not yet the case for all of these pupils. Some do not yet receive support that is consistently effective enough to ensure that their progress is rapid. You have recently commissioned an external review of the pupil premium to ensure that you are spending this funding wisely.
- You explained how the software that leaders purchased to track pupils' progress when national curriculum levels were abolished is not meeting the needs of your staff. After training, they are now ready to begin using an alternative system in

September, which you judge will give you easy and detailed information about pupils' achievements. You aim to pass this data on to the governing body. This will enable them to fulfil their role in challenging you about the progress of different groups even more effectively.

- While most staff have high expectations of pupils' presentation and insist that pupils set out their work neatly, this is not the case for all. The scrutiny of pupils' English and mathematics exercise books that I undertook during my visit showed that a small minority of pupils are allowed to complete their work without sufficient care and pride. Leaders are determined to attend to this urgently, because they believe that a scruffy level of presentation from any of Carlyle's pupils does not reflect the school's aspirational culture.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the school's new system for recording and tracking the progress of pupils is implemented effectively as planned
- all disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported well so that they consistently make brisk progress from their starting points
- all staff show pupils how to set out their work neatly and insist that they consistently do so.

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

Yours sincerely

Roary Pownall
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met you and shared my key lines of enquiry. I also met with other senior leaders, members of the governing body, the subject leaders for English and mathematics and the coordinator of the provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. I considered the responses of parents from Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and the school's most recent questionnaire to parents.

We visited classes in all year groups, spending a short time in each. I looked at a large sample of pupils' work. I viewed a range of documents, including leaders' evaluation of the school's current performance and its plans for further

improvement, information on how the pupil premium funding is spent and a number of policy documents, including those for safeguarding and for the provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. I examined the school's website to check that it meets requirements on the publication of specified information. I observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and met with a group of them at breaktime. We visited the school's breakfast club to check that pupils were safe, happy and looked after well.