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Mr Martin Turnham
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Dear Mr Turnham

Short inspection of Desford Community Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 5 July 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 September 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You and the governing body are successfully managing changes as the school expands. You have established a clear vision for the school, building on previous successes and strengthening the school still further. You have carefully recruited new staff and have built a strong team of teaching staff. This, combined with the professional development you provide, is supporting continued improvement in the quality of teaching. Everyone is committed to further improving outcomes for pupils.

There is an all-pervasive caring ethos. Pupils are proud of their school and they show respect and consideration for each other and their teachers. Relationships are very strong. Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning. They collaborate and work well together. Parents are almost unanimous in their praise for your school. Many offered comments relating to how pupils flourish 'both academically and holistically'. You place clear emphasis on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, which is strong. Pupils in Year 6 spoke very eloquently about the importance of challenging stereotypes in relation to gender or religious belief: 'People should treat each other with respect.' They conduct themselves impeccably around the school and in classrooms where they concentrate, apply themselves to their work and confidently offer contributions to class discussions.

You have addressed many of the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Teachers plan lessons that engage pupils effectively. Pupils in a key stage 2 mathematics lesson, for example, solved a 'crime mystery' in which they drew and compared line graphs of suspects' heartbeats in order to identify the 'culprit'. This promoted enthusiasm and a sense of purpose. You and senior and middle leaders provide well-chosen training for staff to ensure that teaching is of high quality. Your school works closely within a cluster of schools, sharing expertise to develop new approaches to teaching. You have enhanced the provision for mathematics by introducing a new mastery-based approach, for example. The impact of your school's 'writing plan' is evident in the quality of pupils' work across the school.

You have focused on the most important skills pupils need in reading, writing and mathematics to accelerate progress and raise attainment. You have raised teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve and for the large majority of pupils attainment and progress are improving across the school. However, pupils' work and school assessment information show teachers do not consistently challenge the most able pupils so that they achieve at greater depth.

You, the governing body and your senior and middle leaders have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Your evaluation of the school's performance is accurate overall and improvement planning focuses on relevant targets to raise standards. However, improvement plans, lesson observation feedback summaries and documents relating to the performance management of staff do not focus sharply enough on the progress of different groups of pupils.

Safeguarding is effective.

The school has a strong culture of safeguarding. You support your team well to meet the requirements for safeguarding pupils. Recruitment checks are thorough and you and the governing body check and review these arrangements regularly. Staff and the governing body undertake regular child protection and safeguarding training, and induction processes ensure that new members of staff are fully aware of school policies and how to keep pupils safe.

Pupils say they feel safe and are well cared for in school. They are very confident that staff will help them if needed. Pupils talk enthusiastically about the ways that they are taught to keep safe, including how to protect themselves from the risks they face when they are using online technology. The vast majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, said the school is a safe place and their children are happy and well looked after.

Inspection findings

- Teachers' professional development and leaders' performance management of staff have helped to improve the quality of teaching. However, while leaders' monitoring reports on the quality of teaching provide good guidance and

coaching for aspects of provision, they do not place sharp enough emphasis on the progress made by different groups of pupils, particularly the most able and those who are disadvantaged, to ensure that these pupils make consistently good progress from their starting points.

- The early years leader and the deputy headteacher have created an environment that supports children's learning in Reception well. Leaders have improved the quality of the transition from pre-school settings to Reception. The 'school ready' programme, for example, helps to ensure that children are better prepared for the Reception Year and teachers better understand children's needs. Children in the early years make good progress from their starting points, and the proportion of children who achieve a good level of development has improved considerably since 2016.
- Standards are improving across the school. The proportion of pupils achieving the required standard in the Year 1 phonics check has improved since 2016 and pupils' attainment at the end of Year 2 represents good progress from pupils' starting points. At the end of key stage 2, the large majority of pupils achieve the standards expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics. However, the proportions of children exceeding the expected standards in the early years and achieving at greater depth in key stages 1 and 2 for reading, writing and mathematics are still too low.
- The quality of writing is high across the school. Teachers and teaching assistants are often skilled at questioning pupils to take their learning forward. The inspector observed a lesson in key stage 1 in which the teacher skilfully highlighted how pupils could improve the structure of their sentences as well as their use of punctuation. Pupils in the early years and key stage 1 apply their understanding of phonics well in their writing and pupils in key stage 2 produce good quality writing in all year groups. However, expectations for the quality and presentation of writing are not as high in other subjects, such as science and history, as they are in pupils' English books.
- Pupils' work in their mathematics books shows that they produce work of a good standard. Teachers ensure that pupils are taught to understand the important ideas in mathematics and have a good grasp of calculation methods. There are many examples of pupils engaging with a range of problem solving activities. However, sometimes teachers do not move pupils on to more challenging work quickly enough, and pupils do not have enough opportunities to develop their reasoning skills.
- The pupil premium is used provide a range of focused interventions. These, and the support of the pupil premium leader, are having a positive impact on improving the achievement of disadvantaged pupils. The school's information on pupils' progress and pupils' work shows that disadvantaged pupils overall make progress similar to other pupils in the school and sometimes better. This is not, however, consistent in all classes and very few disadvantaged pupils attain at greater depth.
- In 2016, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils was well below that seen nationally. You and your staff work closely with the families of the small number of pupils who have high rates of absence. Current figures show that while still

below that seen nationally, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils has improved each year for the last three years.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- actions to check pupils' achievement, plans for improvement, and the management of teachers' performance focus more sharply on improving the progress of the most able pupils and those who are disadvantaged, so that more of these pupils achieve at greater depth
- teaching enables all groups of pupils, including the most able and those who are disadvantaged, to make the progress they should, including promoting pupils' reasoning skills in mathematics.

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

Yours sincerely

John Lawson
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met you and the deputy headteacher and shared with you my key lines of enquiry. I also met with three members of the governing body, a representative from the local authority, pupils from Year 6 and parents, who I spoke with at the start of the school day. I considered the 160 responses from Parent View, Ofsted's online survey. We visited all classes in the school, spending a short time in each, and I looked at a sample of pupils' work with middle leaders. I viewed a range of documents including the school's self-evaluation of its own performance, plans for further development, information about how the pupil premium is spent and a number of policy documents, including those for safeguarding.