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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



6 October 2017

Mrs Joanne Chapman
Headteacher
Gayton Junior School
Gayton Avenue
Littleover
Derby
Derbyshire
DE23 1GA

Dear Mrs Chapman

Short inspection of Gayton Junior School

Following my visit to the school on 26 September 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 June 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since taking up post as headteacher in January 2016, you have worked with staff and governors to build upon the existing strengths of the school. You lead the school with a clear sense of purpose. You have a determination, shared by other staff, that all pupils should have the very best experiences. The Gayton Passport offers pupils a wide range of interesting and exciting learning opportunities during their time at the school. They learn to swim, go to a castle, fly a kite and build a den – among many other things. Teaching of reading, writing, mathematics and science is increasingly effective. Pupils love coming to school, describing it as 'amazing' and 'perfect'. They are justifiably proud of their work. Pupils behave well in lessons and when moving around the school. They respond very well to the high expectations that all who work at the school have of them. Pupils know they can rely on staff to care for them, to support them when they need it, and to make them work hard. As one child said to me, 'Hard work? That's a good thing.'

The staff value pupils' work and efforts, such as their commitment to homework, and recognise these using the school's badge system. Pupils are very keen to maintain the high standards needed to keep their gold badges. The curriculum, teaching and the whole-school experience make very strong contributions to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils benefit from a wide variety of visitors, visits, including to different places of worship, and extra-curricular activities such as clubs. During the inspection, a group of pupils in Year 5 were participating in the Prince William Award,

which aims to develop teamwork and decision making.

You expect the very best from your staff and they are keen to improve further. You have developed a collaborative culture in which all staff share their successes and ask for help and advice when they need it. They visit each other's classrooms and other schools to extend their skills and practice. You provide them with well-designed professional development opportunities. For example, you identified the need for teachers to give better verbal feedback to pupils during lessons. Pupils explained to me how feedback from teachers and from their classmates helps them. They know what they have done well and what they need to do to improve their work. The impact of this can be seen in pupils' consistently high attainment in writing.

Parents are very positive about the work of the school. They appreciate the care and support offered to their children. They are pleased that you expect high standards of work and behaviour. The vast majority of parents would recommend the school to others.

The last inspection report asked leaders to improve the way that they monitor the work of the school. Working with leaders at all levels, you have successfully done this. You provided them with external support where necessary. Together, you regularly check on the quality of teaching, the work in pupils' books and their progress. You use this information to develop clear and succinct plans for further improvement. Leaders are passionate about improving the quality of teaching and ensuring that pupils do as well as possible.

You, other staff and the governing body are very ambitious for the school. You know the school very well as a result of your checks on teaching and learning. This has enabled you to identify the right priorities for improvement. Pupils have many opportunities to develop their knowledge and understanding of other subjects. Subject leaders provide useful advice to teachers on how to challenge the most able pupils. You recognise, however, that pupils do not yet have a deep enough understanding of subject-specific skills and how to apply them.

Safeguarding is effective.

Senior leaders and the governing body ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You undertake regular safeguarding audits and use these to improve your practice further. You involve governors closely in this so that the governing body can check that the school is doing what it should.

You promote a strong and effective safeguarding culture throughout the school. There are robust systems in place for the recruitment and induction of new staff. Teaching, support and administrative staff receive regular training and are vigilant. Security systems are effective and you rigorously assess the risks of all on-site and off-site activities.

You and other members of the safeguarding team have strong links with relevant outside agencies. Safeguarding records are detailed and of good quality. You follow safeguarding issues through with tenacity. As a result, you ensure that pupils receive the help and support they need in a timely way.

Pupils say they feel safe. All parents who spoke to me, or who responded to Ofsted's online survey, agree that the school keeps its pupils safe. Pupils said they know who to talk to if they have a problem, pointing out the safeguarding team's poster to me. They are confident that staff will deal with any issues, including bullying, promptly and well. Staff teach pupils to use the internet safely and the school provides a range of website information for parents on this topic.

Inspection findings

- In 2015, pupils' attainment and progress in reading at the end of Year 6 were above the national averages. In 2016, however, pupils' attainment dropped and progress slowed. Standards in reading were still broadly average but were well below the high standards that the pupils achieved in writing and mathematics. You recognised that some pupils did not read widely enough to develop an extended vocabulary. Others did not have the 'stamina' to read longer pieces within the time allowed. You have changed the way that you teach reading to deal with these issues. Improvements were not in place for long enough to have an impact on pupils' attainment at the end of Year 6 in 2017. Assessment information for pupils currently in the school shows an improving picture. Pupils are now making better progress in reading.
- Teachers now use the 'six reading monsters' strategy to ask pupils more targeted questions. This helps teachers to gauge pupils' understanding and so offer extra support or challenge where needed. Pupils are required to think hard and extend their spoken and written answers. Teachers use a range of effective techniques, including technology, to engage pupils' interest in reading tasks and arouse their curiosity. Teaching assistants give effective support to pupils, particularly to those who can be more reticent.
- You have worked hard to raise the profile of reading within the school, with a particular focus on reading for pleasure. Pupils greatly enjoy the opportunity to hear teachers read to them at length. They undertake challenges based on what they have read and eagerly borrow the new books you have purchased. Most pupils read regularly at home but some parents feel less confident in supporting their children's reading. You have already given parents support and advice and plan to do more work in this area.
- Overall, attainment in mathematics is above the national average, but only a small proportion of disadvantaged pupils reach the highest standards. More of them reach these standards in reading and writing. These pupils have lower starting points in mathematics when they join the school. You use the pupil premium funding effectively to provide them with targeted support from teachers and highly trained teaching assistants. As a result, pupils are making more rapid progress and standards are rising further.
- Pupils have very well developed writing skills. They now assess their own work accurately and receive clear feedback from their teachers and classmates. They use this information to improve their writing. Pupils use these skills to great effect in English and other subjects, producing work that is lively and interesting. Subsequent feedback often relates to the writing element of their work. As a result, pupils are less aware of the individual subject skills they need to develop.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers use the new approaches to teaching of reading fully, including involving parents, so that pupils achieve as well in reading as they do in writing
- teachers plan activities that help pupils achieve high levels of subject-specific skills in all subjects.

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

Joanne Sanchez-Thompson
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I visited most classes with either you or the deputy headteacher to observe teaching, learning and assessment. We also checked pupils' progress in their workbooks and folders. We discussed the school's effectiveness and the actions taken to ensure the school's continued improvement.

I met with the leaders for reading and the curriculum, the pupil premium leader, and two governors. I spoke with a representative of the local authority on the telephone. I talked with a group of pupils from Years 5 and 6 and informally with other pupils in lessons and around the school. I met with parents on the playground at the beginning of the school day.

I reviewed a range of documents, including your evaluation of the school's effectiveness, the school's improvement plan and external evaluations of the school's work. I also scrutinised the school's safeguarding systems, records and associated documents. I checked assessment information on how well pupils are achieving. I considered 21 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View) and nine free-text comments from parents.