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Mrs Sarah Houseman
Dovedale Primary School
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Dear Mrs Houseman

Short inspection of Dovedale Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 7 November 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 converted to become an academy.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You took up post as the new headteacher in September 2017. Since then, you have led a swift and accurate evaluation of the school's current strengths and areas for improvement and there is already a convincing plan for the year ahead. You say that you have found the school to be welcoming and calm, with determined and aspirational staff, leaders and governors. During my visit, this was my own experience too. Parents are overwhelmingly happy with the quality of education and safety at your school. The school surveys parents at least once per year and acts on the few criticisms or concerns of individual parents. A recent example from 2016/17 where some parents said they would like more variety in extra-curricular clubs led to 19 clubs being offered last year. In addition, there is a wide range of trips, activities and broader experiences, including the arts, sports and forest schools.

The pupils' conduct is excellent. In lessons, they are attentive and keen to do well. Children in the early years were seen already able to work cooperatively and intently on a range of activities, many of which involved reading and writing. For example, one group was on a treasure hunt following written clues with instructions, which developed understanding of words such as 'below'. Older pupils are confident and knowledgeable about their learning and the good relationships in the school. One pupil explained the Dovedale 'I Can Do' approach and how it worked well.

Pupils particularly like the school's new programme to develop reading and could talk eloquently about how it works and how well their reading is improving as a result.

Governors are knowledgeable because they often visit the school and get truly involved in the life of the school. School leaders feel well supported by the trust and value the support from their partner schools. For example, the joint approach to mathematics teaching and learning has supported the considerable success of key stage 2 pupils in recent years.

The school has improved in other areas too. Overall, by the time they start Year 1, the percentage of children who have reached a good level of development has been above national figures for the last few years. These improvements continue into Years 1 and 2 where the attainment in the national phonics check at the end of Year 1 and the end of Year 2 assessments are also now in line with or better than the national average. There is still more improvement possible and school leaders are keen to make sure it happens. For example, although there are improvements for most children in the early years and pupils in key stage 1, leaders have not yet ensured that disadvantaged children experience the same amount of success. For the older pupils, the higher expectations for reading by the end of Year 6 have not yet been fully addressed. As a result, progress in reading is not as strong as progress in mathematics and in writing.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You are quickly developing detailed knowledge of the pupils in your school. As the school's designated safeguarding officer, you have checked that all staff and governors are trained and know what to do if they are concerned about a child. Recruitment procedures are secure and the safeguarding policy is detailed and up to date. The school uses an electronic system for staff to report any concerns. It is effective for this purpose and for the secure recording of actions and decisions. You have already begun to address the few administrative issues which have emerged such as when the name of the designated safeguarding leader changed from the previous headteacher to your own.

Pupils say that they feel safe and know what to do if they need help. Parents agree with this. Pupils have been taught how to keep themselves safe. For example, pupils understand that they should not respond to people they do not know on the internet. They also know that all visitors to the school should wear a badge and that they should tell a teacher if they notice someone without identification.

The school buildings and grounds are secure and well maintained. Visitors to the school are checked carefully.

Inspection findings

- Overall, children make a strong start in Reception and this continues in key stage

1. There is a skilled and knowledgeable team of teachers and other adults who work effectively with the children in the early years. Throughout the school, the progress of individual pupils is tracked carefully by leaders and extra support is provided quickly where needed. For example, leaders have moved the timing of assemblies back to provide an opportunity for almost instant extra help with the morning's learning. However, the progress of disadvantaged pupils has not kept pace with the improvements seen for the majority. In some places, it has got worse. Numbers are very small in each year. In some cases, disadvantaged children have special educational needs and/or disabilities as well. Nevertheless, over time, there has not been improvement for this group of pupils. The pupil premium strategy has not been sufficiently clear about intended impact. Plans and tracking have not made consistent reference to the progress made by pupils with similar starting points nationally who are not disadvantaged. Additional funding has not been effectively targeted on the particular barriers faced by disadvantaged pupils in this school. Governors have provided some challenge on this but have not been persistent. The trust has already recognised this as an important area of their schools' work and has commissioned a pupil premium review for later this year.
- Leaders and governors have already identified reading as an important area for improvement. This has been rapid because you understand the urgency of this work. There is already a convincing plan. It includes one significant decision taken in March 2017 to change the approach to reading from Year 2 onwards. Although this was too late to affect the key stage 2 reading test results last summer, it has begun to show success in almost every class. For some individual pupils, the improvements are striking. As a result, the younger pupils are using phonic strategies to read new words while older pupils are reading increasingly challenging books with fluency and expression. I was told by some of the older pupils that this has been the best change the school has made and that they are now enjoying reading. This work is in its early stages and some aspects of the plan have not yet taken place. Current assessment systems do not make the link between improved reading age and the wider reading skills needed to do well in the reading test at the end of Year 6. Leaders are aware of this and have purchased a different assessment system, which will be used for the first time later this term. This will mean that leaders will then be able to compare the current progress of pupil groups, such as the disadvantaged, with national progress and refine plans accordingly.
 - At the time of the inspection, some information which governors and leaders should have ensured was published on the school website or elsewhere was missing. You had already noticed this and a new website has already been built using good practice from other schools and legal checklists. This new website is almost complete and should be available to parents very soon.
 - The trust had also discussed this issue before the inspection was known about and has started to develop a work schedule for governors. This is not yet in use but will help governors to remember what needs to be done throughout the year.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- The pupil premium strategy is reviewed and refined so that it is more effective in improving the progress made by disadvantaged pupils. This will include more precise measures of impact, which compare their progress with non-disadvantaged pupils nationally, a more precise identification of the barriers faced by individual pupils, targeted use of the additional funding to address these barriers and the use of the new assessment system to enable leaders to carry out accurate in-year monitoring of the progress of pupil groups and the impact of interventions.
- Improvement plans for reading continue and develop so that pupils acquire the full range of skills needed to be a successful reader and their progress at the end of Year 6 is in line or better than national figures in 2018 and beyond.
- All statutory information for parents and others and all statutory school policies are published on the school website or elsewhere, if appropriate, so that the school is legally compliant and remains so in the future.

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

Yours sincerely

Joanne Ward
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I considered evidence from a range of sources, including performance information from the Inspection Dashboard 2016, 2015, (2014) and from Assessing School Performance for 2017. I also checked the school's website and read key policies, including those for safeguarding and the pupil premium review and strategy. I met with the designated safeguarding lead and deputies. I scrutinised a sample of safeguarding records and other policy documentation linked to safeguarding. I had meetings with other adults, including the headteacher, key leaders, governors and the new chief executive officer of the trust. I reviewed school information on current pupils' outcomes. I observed teaching and learning in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2, hearing some key stage 1 and key stage 2 children read.

I analysed the results from Parent View, talked to parents at the start of the day and considered the results from Ofsted staff and pupil questionnaires.