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Paul Scott
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Dear Mr Scott

Short inspection of Arboretum Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 21 November 2017 with Hazel Henson, Ofsted Inspector, 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 and has ensured that the school continues to improve. The school has undergone some significant changes. Pupil numbers have doubled and the school now admits two-year-old children into its Nursery class. The changing nature of the local community is reflected in the much wider range of languages that are spoken by pupils at home. Many of the new pupils do not speak very much English or start mid-way through the school year. Some have spent very little time in schools before starting or have challenging backgrounds, for example, those who are seeking asylum.

Since your appointment in September 2016, you have been determined to strengthen the good work of the school. You quickly identified what needed to be done to make sure that the school responded effectively to its changing circumstances. This has had a positive impact on pupils' achievement, especially in the early years and in key stage 1.

Pupils speak in glowing terms about their school, describing it as 'stupendous' and 'supportive'. They are inspired to succeed because, they say, school is 'aspirational' in that it enables them to 'reach for the stars'. Pupils are certain that there is no bullying at the school; indeed, their courtesy, kindness and care are delightful to see. In many lessons, pupils support each other effectively in their learning, for example through the classroom 'experts' of the day who act as teachers' assistants. In other instances, teachers group pupils thoughtfully in order to provide good

support and challenge where it is needed. The pupils' positive attitudes to learning and their respectful behaviour reflect the school's values and leaders' good work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare.

You place emphasis on shared leadership, and your team members describe themselves as 'happy, empowered and motivated'. You and your leaders are very clear about the strengths of the school and the areas for further improvement. As a result, you have successfully addressed the recommendations from the last inspection. In particular, leaders' work to improve pupils' problem-solving skills in mathematics has been effective. Pupils have acquired a range of techniques for tackling problems successfully. Many have become confident mathematicians who relish choosing the high 'spice' level of challenge in their work.

Another recommendation from the last inspection was to develop a greater degree of involvement from parents in supporting their children's learning. You have indeed strengthened this work in a wide variety of ways. Parents are welcomed into school on a regular basis, for example through lesson drop-ins, early morning reading sessions and the 'tea and toast with teachers'. As a result, parents are complimentary about the school, offering comments such as 'My children love this school very much', and 'The teachers are very helpful and understanding'. You, along with your governors, are sensitive to the changing local community in your locality. You have recently begun to develop good links with community and faith groups as well as with parents. You are well aware that this work will be ongoing.

You have accurately identified the need to improve pupils' rates of progress in reading by the end of key stage 2. This is especially important in view of the very high proportion of pupils at the school for whom English is an additional, and sometimes a brand new, language.

Safeguarding is effective.

Everyone at the school works with a common purpose to ensure the safety and welfare of pupils. Staff at all levels, including those who are multi-lingual, know the pupils very well. They respond quickly to any child protection concerns or issues that may arise. You make sure that any necessary actions are followed through with persistence to keep each pupil safe.

As a result of your effective preventative work with vulnerable families, the school's rates of absence and persistent absence remain consistently below national figures.

Pupils said, with certainty, that they feel safe at the school. They have confidence in staff to deal with any misbehaviour quickly and decisively.

You have made sure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose, including training for staff and governors, and that records are thorough.

Inspection findings

- In the early years, the school has nursery provision for two- and three-year olds as well as three Reception classes. Leadership and teaching in the early years are good, and there is a strong sense of unity across the whole department. As a result, children are making at least good progress from their low starting points. In 2017, the majority of children in the early years reached a good level of development. This represents a significant improvement from previous years.
- Likewise, at the end of key stage 1, a much higher proportion attained at greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics. These improvements reflect the impact of the school's work to make sure that pupils make the best possible progress from their starting points.
- The teaching of phonics is a strength of the school. Your work in this regard is recognised as a model for other schools in the area. Pupils of all ages receive intensive support, in proportion to their acquisition of English. As a result, the large majority of pupils typically achieve the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check.
- By the end of key stage 2, pupils' rates of progress in mathematics and writing are consistently at least in line with national averages. However, pupils' rates of progress in reading have been below the national average for the past two years. You and your leaders have analysed the information and have targeted additional support to make sure that standards in reading improve as rapidly as possible.
- Your current work to review and develop your curriculum is proving effective. Pupils spoke with infectious enthusiasm about their work across a wide range of subjects. Pupils with whom I spoke were able to describe science experiments they had carried out to demonstrate the effects of chemical changes. Others could proudly list kings and queens in order as part of their 'majestic monarchs' topic. The quality of work in their books shows pupils' good grasp of ambitious and imaginative vocabulary. For example, one described a character in a text as 'wily and passionate' and another wrote about a location in a story as a 'warped, rickety old water tower'.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils' rates of progress in reading by the end of key stage 2 improve to be at least in line with the national average
- their work to involve parents in supporting their children's learning continues and expands to include newly arrived families and other local faith and community groups.

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

Christine Watkins
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, the deputy headteacher and other leaders. I also met with the chair of governors and a parent governor. I held a telephone conversation with your school improvement adviser. The team inspector and I visited all classes, including the Nursery, together with you and another senior leader. The team inspector and I spoke to pupils, both informally during lessons and in a group discussion. We examined pupils' work in their books and observed their behaviour and conduct around school. We spoke to parents informally at the beginning of the day and considered the eight responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey. We considered a wide range of documents, including those relating to safeguarding, staff recruitment checks, minutes of meetings of the governing body, information relating to pupils' achievement, the school's self-evaluation summary and the school improvement plan.