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Mrs Nichola Way
Executive Headteacher
Leys Junior School
Flowery Leys Lane
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Derbyshire
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Dear Mrs Way

Short inspection of Leys Junior School

Following my visit to the school on 30 January 2018, 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 your school was judged to be good in January 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Leys Junior is a welcoming school that helps pupils of all abilities and backgrounds to succeed. Almost all of the parents and carers spoken with during the inspection, or who left comments on Parent View, were full of praise for your school. One comment captured their opinions, 'The teachers go out their way to help each individual. It really is a lovely school.'

Governors and staff emphasised that you deserve much of the credit for the school's continued success. High levels of disadvantage in the local community provide a particular challenge for you and your staff. But your ambition is high. Your target is that pupils will reach standards in reading, writing and mathematics above the national average. You have met this target in each of the last three years. This reflects the focus you and other leaders place on helping teachers be as effective as they can possibly be. Together, your leadership and your staff's expertise mean that pupils are thoroughly prepared for their secondary schools.

Relationships between staff and pupils are friendly and respectful. Pupils speak with insight and pride about what it means to be a member of the pupils' parliament. They appreciate that staff value a wide range of achievements. The school's motto, 'Learn, Grow and Flourish', reflects the school's aim that pupils gain a wide range of experiences that will broaden their horizons. This includes extensive extra-curricular provision. Awards, such as 'historian of the year' and the 'outstanding effort' award, motivate pupils of all abilities and interests to try their best.

In the previous inspection report, you were asked to improve pupils' progress, particularly in mathematics. Since then pupils' achievement in mathematics has steadily improved to the extent that their attainment is above average and their progress is in line with other pupils nationally.

You and the governors were also asked at the time of the previous inspection to check more closely how effectively the pupil premium spending is accelerating the progress of disadvantaged pupils. You now conduct a termly review of the pupil premium spending. Pupils' performance information shows that, year on year, disadvantaged pupils are making better progress. However, from their lower starting points disadvantaged pupils do not reach the same standards as their peers. You recognise that securing still higher standards for disadvantaged pupils is an important next step for the school.

Finally, the previous report recommended that pupils present their work more neatly and that teaching assistants are used more effectively in lessons. Both of these recommendations have been successfully addressed.

The strong record of above-average standards has not diminished your desire for further improvement. You recognise that occasional dips in the level of challenge in lessons means that overall teaching is not outstanding. Pupils are not currently making the outstanding progress the school is striving to achieve. You are addressing this through helping teachers improve their questioning and feedback in lessons.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and the head of school have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Parents, staff and pupils appreciate the care that staff take to ensure that the school is a safe place to be.

Staff are knowledgeable and aware of the potential risks to children's well-being. They are kept regularly up to date through notices, briefings and team meetings. Any concerns raised are responded to quickly and thoroughly investigated. Referrals are made promptly and records are kept confidentially and securely. The school's safeguarding procedures are regularly quality assured by a member of the governing body with suitable expertise. The school's safeguarding procedures and policies are very thorough.

Pupils say that they feel safe in school. The curriculum provides them with important information about keeping safe and healthy. For example, sessions on online safety ensure that pupils are fully aware of the dangers of sharing personal information when using computers or mobile telephones.

Pupils have a number of ways to seek support if they are anxious or sad. Crucially, they trust the adults in the school. Pupils know the school staff will do all they can to ensure that they are safe both inside and outside school.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection, my particular focus was on how well pupils achieve in reading, how effectively their personal development and welfare are promoted and what leaders are doing to continue to improve the school.
- Staff overwhelmingly agree that the school has improved since the previous inspection. They are proud to work at Leys Junior. Your senior and middle leaders now play a much more active part in driving improvement. They enjoy their additional responsibilities and commented that you have been 'incredibly supportive' as they have grown into their enhanced roles. A particular feature of the leadership team is the rigour with which it quality assures teaching and learning. This rigour means staff are clear about the elements in their practice that can be improved. Staff appreciate this clarity. Governors equally value the level of detail you provide about the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are very well qualified to fulfil their role as critical friends. The governors I met are under no doubt that you are an exceptional leader. They judge that you have transformed the school since your appointment just before the previous inspection.
- In both 2016 and 2017, pupils' standards in reading were in line with the national average. However, their progress from their key stage 1 reading assessments was below average. A factor preventing better progress was that many pupils struggled to answer test questions that required them to 'read between the lines'. Visits to lessons showed the early impact of the training, coaching and support the English subject leader has put into addressing the issue. I saw pupils using inference and other skills as they discussed the books they were studying. Crucially, through strategies such as 'Kidnap a parent', the school is successfully encouraging many more parents to read with their children at home. Embedding and developing all of these strategies will be key to securing better progress in reading.
- The previous inspection recommended that adults who worked alongside teachers were well briefed and effectively deployed. This was certainly the case in all of the lessons visited during the inspection. Teaching assistants were skilled in asking questions and providing explanations. It was clear that they fully understood the school's approaches to improving pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. There are specific training programmes for staff who support pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. A senior leader checks carefully on the delivery and impact of any extra support to ensure that it has the intended impact. There is strong evidence that this support is helping pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress.
- Your school's successes are not limited to good academic outcomes. For example, there is a strong emphasis on sporting competition. Every child takes part in at least three competitive events a year. Developing musical talents too is a priority. All pupils learn a musical instrument. As well as taking part in the largest choir in England, pupils also enjoy three musical concerts a year. The curriculum provides plenty of opportunities for pupils to think about their futures. Visitors to school and enterprise activities, such as designing and making

chocolates and chocolate boxes in a project based upon 'The Apprentice', give pupils knowledge and experience of a range of careers. In addition, pupils learn about handling money through the school's reward 'currency' – the 'Ley'. They receive 'Leys' as classroom rewards, prizes or as payment for completing jobs in school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they embed and drive forward the improvements to teaching reading and working in partnership with parents, which are already having a positive impact on pupils' progress in reading
- they improve further the quality of teaching in order to accelerate pupils' progress, particularly for disadvantaged pupils.

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

Yours sincerely

Anthony O'Malley
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you, the head of school and other members of staff to discuss the school's effectiveness. I also met with four governors, including the chair of the governing body. I met with the members of the pupils' parliament and talked with others around the school and during lessons. I observed teaching and learning throughout the school. I looked at work in pupils' books and heard pupils read.

I considered numerous documents, including those linked to keeping the pupils safe, the school's self-evaluation document and the school improvement plan. I considered the 27 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, together with the views of parents gathered as they brought their children to school. I also took into account the responses of 21 members of staff and 27 pupils to their online surveys.