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Miss Claire Whetstone
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Dear Miss Whetstone

Short inspection of New Mills Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 28 February 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 the school was judged to be good in November 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have increased the frequency and scope of your checks on the quality of teaching and learning, making sure that findings are discussed with individuals and shared effectively with the wider team. You have introduced regular review meetings to ensure that teachers' professional targets are closely linked to pupils' progress. As a result, the quality of teaching has been strengthened and the majority of pupils typically make good progress and attain at least in line with national averages in reading, writing and mathematics.

Since the last inspection, the leadership team has reviewed its spending of the pupil premium funding for disadvantaged pupils in order to provide more specific, targeted support for pupils. For example, you have established a system whereby pupils receive one-to-one, same-day support from a teaching assistant which is precisely targeted in order to tackle any issues arising from that day's learning. Your current assessments show that this is beginning to have a positive impact on the progress and attainment of disadvantaged pupils throughout the school. In particular, the most able disadvantaged pupils are currently achieving equally as well as other most able pupils in the school.

All of your intentions and your rationale for the pupil premium spending were set out clearly and precisely in the 2016/17 planning document. However, the 2017/18 version has not followed the required format and contains less precision. This means that the current information provided for governors does not include the precise breakdown of figures that would enable governors to continue to assure themselves that the funding is being well spent.

Your self-evaluation summary and school improvement plans show that leaders and governors are currently focusing on a very wide range of initiatives. These plans relate to New Mills Primary School itself and also to your partnership work with a local group of 11 schools. In some instances, there is inconsistency between documents and, as a result, the priorities for school improvement are not as clear as they might be.

Parents speak highly of the school. One parent summed it up by describing the school as 'a wonderful, warm and supportive community school'. Others praise, in particular, the range of sports activities available for pupils and the whole-school projects, such as the 'China' project and the 'daily mile'. Parents also value the progress their children make in their learning, saying, for example, that their child has 'come on in leaps and bounds'.

I spoke with a wide range of pupils both during their lessons and in a discussion group. It is clear that pupils are enthusiastic about their learning. They say that they especially enjoy science and local history topics, as well as the residential trips, which, they say, boost their confidence. Pupils are proud of their sporting achievements and relish the many opportunities they have for physical exercise before, during and after school. The school is very well equipped with outdoor play and learning resources. Pupils say that the school council helped to devise rules and a rota for outdoor activities. As a result of their involvement, pupils believe playtimes run smoothly and without incident.

Safeguarding is effective.

Pupils say that they feel safe at the school and that there are no problems with bullying or disruptive behaviour. They speak knowledgeably about the meaning of bullying in all its forms. In particular, older pupils were able to reflect on the impact of what they describe as 'psychological bullying' linked to online safety, albeit they do not encounter anything of this nature at the school.

Leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Employment checks and procedures meet requirements.

You have a clear process in place for staff to raise and record any child protection concerns. Your records show that concerns are logged appropriately and followed up quickly and decisively. You work with other agencies, where necessary, to make sure that pupils are safe and receive the support they need. Discussions with a range of staff confirmed that you know your pupils and their individual needs very well. This enables you, as a staff team, to remain alert to any change of circumstances and to take quick and decisive action in order to keep pupils safe.

Inspection findings

- The majority of pupils at the school achieve well. Standards of attainment and rates of progress by the end of Year 6 are typically in line with national averages for reading and mathematics, and above average in writing.

- In 2016, disadvantaged pupils made less progress than other pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics. In 2017, disadvantaged pupils made less progress than others nationally in reading. For the last two years, no disadvantaged pupil has achieved at the higher standard in any of the three subjects.
- Your current assessment information shows that as a result of your recent work to support disadvantaged pupils, they are currently making improved progress from their starting points in all year groups. During the inspection, as we visited each class together, we looked in particular at the learning and progress of the most able disadvantaged pupils in each class. When comparing the work in their books to that of other most able pupils, we found no difference in quality or standards.
- Pupils in all classes show positive attitudes to learning. They take pride in their work, and this can be seen in the presentation of their books. In particular, the quality of pupils' writing is a strength of the school. This is partly as a result of teachers' work to encourage pupils to produce written work inspired by a 'real-life experience'. This may be something as simple as a walk in the local area or a visit further afield. Pupils use these experiences successfully to produce thoughtful and competent pieces of writing.
- During discussions with leaders and governors, we identified some aspects of your plans for school improvement which lack clarity and precision. You agreed that this is because you are currently focusing on a very wide range of issues, including those in partnership with the local group of schools. In addition, your current pupil premium planning document contains less detail than the 2016/17 version.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they implement clear and precisely costed plans which will help to enable disadvantaged pupils to make good progress from their starting points and the most able to achieve the high standards of which they are capable
- the school's key planning documents are aligned, so that leaders' and governors' plans for school improvement are clearly prioritised, in order to promote sustained high standards for pupils and further improvements to the quality of teaching.

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

Christine Watkins
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you and the deputy headteacher. I also met with the chair and vice-chair of the governing body. I visited all classes with you and the deputy headteacher and I spoke informally with a range of teaching and support staff. I spoke with pupils during a group discussion and, informally, during lessons. I examined pupils' work in their books. I considered 64 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. I examined a wide range of documents, including those relating to safeguarding, the school's analysis of pupils' current and past achievement, leaders' monitoring records, external reports about the school, the pupil premium spending strategies, the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans.