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14 March 2018

Mrs Gillian Hutton
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Hutton

Short inspection of Pottery 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 March 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education since the previous inspection. You have fostered a strong team spirit among your colleagues, who are proud to work at Pottery Primary and committed to 'going the extra mile' for their pupils. The staff with whom I spoke, including two recently qualified teachers, told me how much they appreciate the range of professional development opportunities they have been given in order to further develop their teaching. Members of staff are mutually supportive of each other. Your strong leadership ensures that they feel very involved in all aspects of school life and understand their roles in bringing about further improvements.

Pottery Primary is an inclusive school. Parents and carers I spoke with before school started told me that 'pupils are treated as individuals', and that 'staff really care about the kids'. One parent told me that her daughter has 'come on in leaps and bounds' as a result of the support she has received. They find the staff approachable and value the quality of communication between the school and themselves, in the form of the monthly newsletter and text messages. The school lies at the heart of the community. Fundraising events for local charities, the choir's performances in residential homes and at the hospital, and the involvement of Pottery children in local traditions such as well dressing, foster a sense of social responsibility in your pupils. The parent-school association also makes a very good contribution in organising the school film club, discos and the summer and winter fairs.

While you, your staff and governors fully recognise the importance of pupils doing well academically, you are all fully committed to ensuring that your pupils become lifelong learners through their enjoyment of learning. Pupils told me how much they enjoy their lessons, particularly those in which they learn about different things through a topic. Year 6 pupils told me, for example, how much they had enjoyed learning about World War 2 by interviewing people who had experienced it, making cakes from 'rations' and learning the lindy hop. Pupils are proud of their school and feel they are making good progress. This was very evident when a group of pupils showed me the 'Pink Book', which serves as a record of the achievement of each class in the school.

As a school, you are keen to develop in your pupils a sense of personal responsibility. I saw this in the number of pupils who act, for example, as class ambassadors, digital leaders or maths buddies. You encourage pupils to have opinions. All of the pupils I talked with were engaging and spoke with real confidence. Outside lessons, pupils benefit from a number of school clubs, such as the art club and the gardening club, and are able to take part in a broad range of sporting activities within school and competitively with other schools.

Following the last inspection, you were required to help pupils who have gaps in their mathematical understanding to close them and to catch up with their classmates. You have learned from best practice in the teaching of mathematics in other schools and invested in the professional development of your teachers and teaching assistants. As a result, staff have improved their mathematical subject knowledge and raised their expectations of what all pupils are able to achieve. You have also used additional funding to provide bespoke subject specialist support to those pupils in danger of falling behind. Teachers are now providing more focused verbal and oral feedback, which is leading to improved progress for pupils. Marking and feedback are consistent with the school's assessment policy. In 2017, by the end of key stage 2, the overall progress made by all groups of pupils was similar to that made by pupils nationally. The percentages of pupils achieving the expected and the higher standard in mathematics were above the national average.

Governors fully understand their strategic role and have a broad range of expertise that enables them to carry out their responsibilities effectively. While they are supportive of you and your colleagues, they also provide a high degree of challenge. Through their understanding of school performance information, they are able to work with you to shape improvement priorities and to evaluate how successfully you are addressing them. Your own understanding of the performance of the school is comprehensive and accurate. The school's improvement priorities are tightly focused, and you have set clear criteria to measure success. You have communicated these priorities to your staff, with the result that they are working collectively and with purpose to achieve them.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team promotes a strong safeguarding culture at the school, ensuring

that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. The business manager is thorough in ensuring that all the required vetting of staff and volunteers takes place. There is considerable professional knowledge and expertise in safeguarding within the governing body that contributes to the school's effectiveness in keeping children safe. All policies are up to date and readily available on the school website. Pupils learn about the importance of staying safe in lessons, in assemblies and during the school's safety week. The conversation I had with a group of pupils and their responses to the pupil survey indicated that they feel safe and that if they had any concerns they would know whom to speak to. They believe that behaviour at the school is good and that if ever bullying occurs members of staff deal with it effectively.

Inspection findings

- Typically, the progress and standards achieved by middle-attaining pupils by the end of both key stage 1 and key stage 2 have been below those of other pupils nationally. In the English and mathematics lessons that we observed, pupils of all abilities were equally challenged. This was also evident when we looked at the work in pupils' books, which shows that pupils of different abilities are making good progress. In mathematics, there is evidence that pupils are developing their reasoning and problem-solving skills and in English over time they are writing with improved levels of grammatical accuracy and fluency.
- Historically, the more able pupils have done well at Pottery Primary. The standards they achieve by the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2 and the progress they make are often better than those of most pupils nationally. This is because teaching staff have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and plan their lessons accordingly. Teaching encourages pupils to think for themselves. It probes their understanding and requires them to justify how they have arrived at a given answer. Work in books shows that teachers make extensive use of additional tasks, which further challenge pupils and deepen their understanding.
- As you recognise, the progress that pupils make in writing remains an area for development. You are, however, successfully addressing this issue. You have increased the emphasis you place on pupils' application of their understanding of grammar as a way of improving the technical accuracy of their work. You are also giving them more opportunities to discuss with their classmates what they are going to write about and how they are going to structure it, before they put pen to paper. In the written work we looked at together, we saw many examples of writing that was creative, well structured and accurate. Through your 'free write' days and encouraging pupils to, for example, enter the competition to write a poem for the forthcoming royal wedding, you are raising the profile and enjoyment of writing across the school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- by the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2, middle-attaining pupils are consistently making at least the same progress and achieving the same standards in all subjects as their peers nationally
- the refinements being made to the teaching of writing result in sustained improvement to pupils' progress.

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

Phil Drabble
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, with the school's business manager and with members of the governing body. I met with a group of middle and senior leaders and with five other members of staff. I also spoke with a group of children and heard two children read. I made a tour of the school, observed teaching in two classes and undertook a scrutiny of pupils' work. I scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, the school improvement plan and documents relating to safeguarding. I spoke with parents as they brought their children to school and took account of their responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey.