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Mrs Karen O'Connor
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs O'Connor

Short inspection of Taddington and Priestcliffe School

Following my visit to the school on 8 March 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 June 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You, and your governors, proudly told me that the school is inclusive and aims to provide for the particular needs of the pupils who attend. An attractive display in the school's entrance, entitled 'Diversity is the one true thing we have in common, let's celebrate it!' sets the tone for your ethos across the school. During my visit, some classes were marking International Women's Day by learning about the lives of inspirational women, such as Mother Teresa. Pupils in every class study books together, such as 'Letters from around the world', to broaden their understanding of the world beyond their local area. Pupils have a strong knowledge of British values, appropriate to their age. They have a growing understanding of a range of religions and cultures. This is preparing them well for life in modern Britain.

Almost without exception, parents and carers who shared their views through the online survey, Parent View, were positive about the school. Parents who shared their views with me during my visit said that they feel welcome in school and that staff are very approachable. One parent summed up the views of many by saying, 'It's a very caring school. It's all about community and quality.' You and your staff invite parents to events such as 'cake and calculations' to help them understand how to help their child at home with mathematics. Parents also enjoy the occasions when they can join their children for worship or school lunch.

You are outward-looking in your approach to school improvement. You and five other local schools have formed strong links through a collaboration named 'CORDS'

(Collaboration Of Rural Derbyshire Schools). You and your staff benefit from professional development and sharing good practice to improve provision at your own school.

You evaluate carefully the quality of teaching and learning, including any new initiative you introduce, to determine what is working well and what needs to improve. The insight this provides has enabled you to identify and address weaknesses in the progress pupils have been making in both writing and mathematics. You have improved the teaching of grammar, for example, so that it is now more systematic. Pupils' books show that pupils use the skills they have learned in their writing. By the end of Year 6 in 2017, a greater proportion of pupils achieved the expected standard and the higher standard in writing than was seen nationally. In mathematics you and your staff now provide a wide range of equipment for pupils to use to help them grasp new concepts. Teachers provide an appropriate level of challenge for pupils, and books show that pupils' problem-solving and reasoning skills are regularly exercised. This has resulted in an improvement in the rate of progress that pupils make in mathematics across key stage 2.

At the time of the last inspection, you were asked to make sure that teachers made clear to pupils what was expected of them. During my visit, we saw in lessons and in books that teachers explain to pupils what they are learning about in the lesson and what they need to do to be successful. As I spoke with pupils, they were able to tell me what they were learning and what their activity involved. During mathematics lessons in particular, teachers provide pupils with work that builds on what they have learned and stretches their thinking. Adults check what pupils have understood and what they can do during the lesson, moving them on to something more difficult when they are ready. You have now identified that there is more to do to ensure that pupils make better progress in their reading, particularly across key stage 2.

You enjoy the full support of the governors. They visit the school to see it in action for themselves and take part in the scrutiny of pupils' work and discussions about the progress pupils are making. They know the school well and, with your encouragement, ask increasingly challenging questions.

Classrooms are industrious places where pupils listen to their teachers and get on with their work well, both independently and in cooperation with their classmates. Pupils are polite and keen to talk about their school. Every pupil I spoke with said that they enjoy school. They cited reasons such as having lots of friends, learning being fun and everyone being kind to each other.

Safeguarding is effective.

You make sure that all the appropriate vetting checks take place when staff and volunteers start working at the school. Your records of safeguarding concerns are detailed and securely kept. Staff receive the necessary training and regular updates so that they are clear about the signs of potential abuse to watch out for and how to report a concern should one arise.

Pupils feel safe in school. They understand that doors are secure so that adults know who is in school. Every parent I spoke with agreed that their children are safe and well cared for at school. Pupils told me that bullying does not really happen at their school. They are confident that an adult would deal with it swiftly, if it ever did. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe when they use the internet. You and your staff make sure that pupils learn a range of personal safety skills, such as 'stranger danger' and road safety.

Inspection findings

- During this short inspection, I focused on how well you are improving pupils' rates of attendance, how well reading is taught and the progress made by pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities.
- Rates of attendance have been below the national average for too long. You recognise this, and improving the situation is a key focus in your school improvement plan. You analyse carefully rates of attendance and have identified a few families whose children's attendance is stubbornly low. You call upon the expertise of the local authority's education welfare officer when attendance is a serious concern. You have introduced half-termly certificates for pupils to reward good levels of attendance. This has had some success. Despite your efforts, too many pupils still do not attend school regularly enough, and a few pupils' attendance remains of significant concern. You and your governors recognise that this must improve as a matter of urgency.
- Since your arrival, you have introduced a new structure for teachers to use to teach phonics in the early years and key stage 1. During my visit, we saw the youngest pupils having fun as they practised the sounds they had been learning, linking them to words. Published information shows that most pupils achieve the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check and, by the end of Year 2 in 2017, all pupils had achieved this milestone. A greater proportion of pupils achieved the expected and higher standards in reading by the end of Year 2 than had done so in 2016.
- You have identified, however, that by the end of Year 6 in 2017, pupils had not made as much progress in reading as they had in writing and mathematics. You have provided teachers with training so that they can better develop pupils' inference skills. These skills are now regularly taught in class. Teachers do not, however, provide frequent opportunities across a range of subjects for pupils to improve their comprehension or inference skills.
- You have been acting as the coordinator for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities until recently. This year, another teacher has taken on the role. She has improved the records that are kept to track and evaluate the provision that is made for the pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. This is allowing you and your staff to check more closely which strategies are working well for the individual pupils.
- You have refined the school's arrangements for assessing and recording the progress pupils make. You and your staff discuss termly the progress that individual pupils make and provide additional support for pupils who need to catch

up. Your records show that the majority of pupils currently in school, including those who have SEN and/or disabilities, are making at least the progress you expect of them. You recognise that you and your staff are not making full use of the information that your system provides. Governors, for example, do not have sufficiently detailed summaries to hold leaders to account.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they work more extensively to improve the rates of pupils' attendance
- teachers provide more opportunities for pupils to practise and improve their comprehension and inference skills
- staff and governors improve their understanding of the school's assessment information so that it can be used to full effect to hold leaders and teachers to account for the progress pupils make.

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

Yours sincerely

Di Mullan
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you, seven members of staff and six governors, including the chair of governors. I held a telephone conversation with a senior adviser from the local authority. I spoke with parents as they brought their children to school. You and I toured the school together, spending time in each class to observe the learning taking place. I spoke with pupils in class and I met with a group of seven pupils, more formally, to talk about their experience of school life. I examined a range of documentation, including the school self-evaluation, the development plan and the school's current assessment information. I scrutinised the single central record of vetting checks and other documentation relating to safeguarding of pupils. Together we examined a range of pupils' books. I considered the views of parents, staff and pupils through their respective online surveys.