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29 March 2018

Miss Claire Walker  
Headteacher  
Portway Infant School  
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Dear Miss Walker

### **Short inspection of Portway Infant School**

Following my visit to the school on 27 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 December 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 ensured that pupils make good progress during their time at the school. When they leave, they are well prepared for the next stage in their education.

Children continue to make a good start to their education at the school. The proportion of children attaining a good level of development at the end of the Reception Year has remained above the national average over the last few years. Children build on their skills in communication, language and literacy as they enter key stage 1. The proportion of pupils who achieve the expected standard in the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1 has been increasing steadily over the last three years. It is now above the national average. The proportions of pupils who achieve the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics by the time they leave Year 2 have been at least average. They show signs of continued improvement and are now slightly above national figures. Too few pupils, however, achieve at greater depth by the end of Year 2 in reading and mathematics.

You have created a cohesive team of staff who fully support your vision to improve the school. You, other teachers, teaching assistants and the governors work well together to formulate the school's improvement plan. Working in teams, you create a common understanding of the school's next steps by careful analysis of the school's performance. This also draws upon your internal assessment information.

Teamwork means staff at all levels contribute to the strategic direction of the school.

Pupils continue to show excellent attitudes to learning. They are thoughtful and kind to each other. Incidents of poor behaviour are very rare and pupils told me that they feel safe in the school. Your work on developing pupils' resilience when tackling demanding work is beginning to have an impact. One reader told me he was 'facing his fears' by tackling a book he knew he would find difficult. The priority you give to pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare has helped to create a caring, thoughtful and considerate learning environment where pupils can thrive.

You have focused your attention on improving the achievement of disadvantaged pupils. This follows a few years when these pupils did not do as well as their peers. You allocate the additional funding for these pupils effectively. You focus activities and interventions well, thinking carefully about each pupil's individual needs. This includes harnessing external services to support pupils who have language, social or emotional needs. As a result, the attainment of disadvantaged pupils has increased, and is now in line with the national average.

You have created a strong and effective leadership team. Leaders take full responsibility for developments in their specific areas. Subject leaders, along with the governing body, regularly review the work of the school to ensure that it is effective. As a result, you identify very specific actions and success criteria that will support improvements. You use staff training time effectively to discuss whole-school priorities and enable teachers to support each other.

You work with external agencies to help develop the school's provision further. Relationships with local schools help to check teachers' assessments of pupils' attainment to make sure that they are accurate. You have forged effective relationships with external consultants who provide high-quality support and guidance to enable the school to continue to develop.

Your accurate self-assessment has identified the need to improve the standards reached by the most able pupils. In mathematics, pupils complete 'Star Border' work to help them to challenge themselves. You rightly acknowledge that this level of challenge is not yet consistent throughout the school. Nevertheless, leaders are well placed to develop the quality of this work further.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils are secure and fit for purpose. You lead this area of the school's work effectively. All members of staff have read and understand the latest documentation from the government about safeguarding the pupils in their care. The checks that you have made on the suitability of staff to work with children are up to date. Staff know how they should report concerns about pupils' welfare.

Records are well organised and you use the information they contain to help you make important decisions about the welfare of vulnerable pupils. The school is actively involved in plans for these pupils. Weekly meetings with staff ensure that they remain up to date with any emerging concerns about a pupil's welfare. They also ensure that vulnerable pupils are well known to all staff so they can keep a close check on their well-being.

### **Inspection findings**

- Writing remains a strength of the school. Teachers provide specific opportunities to learn about punctuation and grammar. A range of stimulating topics helps pupils to make strong progress in this subject.
- Teachers encourage pupils to be self-reliant when they apply their skills in mathematics. Some pupils, however, are not as resilient as others and do not challenge themselves to do demanding enough work. Teachers do not check pupils' understanding rigorously enough. This means they are not picking up situations where pupils' previous attainment and skill levels indicate they should be doing better.
- In reading, pupils build on the strong start they have in the Reception Year as they move through key stage 1. In 2017, more pupils than seen nationally met the expected standard in phonics screening checks in Year 1. The most able pupils, however, are not developing all the skills they need to reach the higher levels when they leave Year 2. You are aware that too few pupils attain at greater depth when they leave the school.
- You have successfully built a strong leadership team that rigorously checks the quality of teaching. Records are clear and focused. Subject leadership has improved significantly since the last inspection. Subject leaders know the strengths of teaching in their areas of responsibility and what they will do next to improve it further.
- The school checks attendance closely. Staff act quickly to work with parents to ensure that pupils attend regularly. Attendance is above the national average. Few pupils are frequently absent. Nonetheless, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils is not as high as that of other pupils. You are aware of this and intend to take a stronger and more focused approach in tackling this issue.
- You have introduced a new approach to setting targets for pupils. This has raised the expectations of staff and pupils. At this stage, however, the impact has not been fully seen in the pupils' achievement at the end of Year 2. Too few pupils are attaining at greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The learning environment you have created in the Reception Year is of a very high quality. There is an atmosphere of excitement as children eagerly engage with the broad range of activities that you provide. Adults undertake regular assessments of children's learning to plan activities to meet the needs of the children. The curriculum makes good use of the interests of the individual child. Adults have high expectations. They celebrate children's early writing through the 'proud cloud' display boards. These encourage children to write. You have a strong focus on developing children's fine motor skills to improve muscle tone

and strength. This helps them to write for sustained periods of time.

- The provision in the early years continues to be a strength of the school. Staff closely check children's progress and intervene when help is needed. Children are keen to learn. The leader of the early years acknowledges that the next step is to reduce the difference between the attainment of the boys and girls.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers provide more challenging activities for the most able pupils in reading and mathematics, so that more pupils achieve at greater depth
- teachers check on pupils' understanding in mathematics more closely during lessons and move them on to further tasks when they are ready so they make faster progress
- staff in the Reception Year plan activities in boys' play that link more closely to their learning in reading, writing and mathematics to reduce the differences between boys' and girls' attainment.

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

Andrew Lakatos  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

I met with you and the other members of the senior leadership team to review its evaluation of the school's effectiveness and to share the key lines of enquiry. I met with members of the governing body to discuss how it holds the school to account and discussed the work of the school with a representative of the local authority. I observed learning with senior leaders and we looked at a sample of pupils' books. I considered the views of parents and carers through Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and your own records. I scrutinised various documents relating to safeguarding, self-evaluation and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. I listened to a sample of readers and asked them about their views of the school. I also talked with class teachers and teaching assistants about the school's priorities and their understanding of the school's safeguarding procedures.