

18 June 2018

Mrs Louise Foster  
Headteacher  
Dale Community Primary School  
Porter Road  
Derby  
Derbyshire  
DE23 6NL

Dear Mrs Foster

### **Short inspection of Dale Community Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 6 June 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 May 2014.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

When you took up your post as headteacher in the spring term 2017, you acted quickly to build on the school's long-standing strengths. You raised the school's ambition for its pupils. Your expectation is that pupils will attain in reading, writing and mathematics at least as highly as pupils do nationally by the time they leave Year 6. To achieve this ambition, you have:

- established a strong senior and middle leadership team
- made very significant changes to the way staff teach reading and writing
- monitored and evaluated closely the impact of the whole-school improvement initiatives
- received expert advice on how to use the pupil premium funding more effectively and put this guidance to good effect.

It is clear that your aspiration and actions are having a positive impact. Staff agree. An overwhelming majority of staff judge that the school is 'a lot better' than at the time of the previous inspection.

Pupils come from over 20 different ethnic groups. They learn and play happily together because you and your staff ensure that Dale is an inclusive and welcoming school. Pupils participate in large numbers in the many sports and other physical activities that the school offers. Not surprisingly, they are proud that the school

excels in sporting competitions, including cricket, tag-rugby, golf and Boccia.

When the school was previously inspected under section 5, leaders were asked to improve teaching and learning in mathematics. Pupils' progress in mathematics is now a strength of the school. Pupils enjoy their mathematics lessons. They talk about mathematical concepts with confidence and use mathematical vocabulary accurately. Published information shows that pupils now make consistently better progress in mathematics in key stage 2 than pupils nationally. Their attainment has risen and is now in line with the national average.

Leaders were also asked to accelerate pupils' progress and raise attainment in reading and writing. The gains seen in mathematics have not been consistently matched in reading and writing. However, you have acted decisively to address this. With the support of external expertise, you have changed how the school teaches reading and writing. Pupils' attainment in reading and writing is rising across the school. Greater proportions of pupils are working at age-related expectations. However, increasing the proportion of pupils exceeding these expectations remains an area for improvement.

A further area for improvement is to increase the proportion of children attaining a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year. The current slow trend of improvement means that too great a proportion of children are not fully prepared for the Year 1 curriculum.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You have ensured that all safeguarding procedures are fit for purpose.

Staff and governors receive regular training so they know how to keep pupils safe. This includes guidance on how to protect pupils from radicalisation and extremism. The school keeps appropriate records of any issues that arise, the actions taken and the impact of these actions. The governor with responsibility for safeguarding checks regularly that all staff follow the safeguarding procedures in line with the school's policies.

Pupils said that they feel safe in school. They know the school staff will do all that they can to ensure their well-being. The inclusion team plays a key role in safeguarding any children who are potentially at risk. Staff in this team work effectively with families and local agencies. For example, they act promptly to ensure that pupils are clean and appropriately dressed for school. The team also has weekly meetings with the New Communities Team. These meetings help children from Eastern European countries settle well into their new school, so they and their families quickly feel part of the 'Dale family'.

The curriculum includes topics such as mental health, staying safe online and other relevant age-appropriate safeguarding topics. Pupils value the information and guidance that these topics give them.

### **Inspection findings**

- In 2016 and 2017, pupils' attainment in reading and writing at the end of key stage 1 was below average. Raising attainment in these subjects is one of your priorities. You appointed an assistant headteacher who has specialist expertise in teaching and learning in key stage 1. She helps teachers plan their lessons. She provides training for staff in areas where they have requested support. She has modelled high-quality teaching. Staff value this support. They said that it is enabling them to be more confident and effective teachers. Pupils in both Year 1 and Year 2 are now making better progress. Increased proportions of pupils have the reading and writing skills that are expected for their ages.
- Since the last section 5 inspection, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year has slowly increased. However, it has remained below the national average. Boys and disadvantaged children have attained at lower levels than girls and other children. The early years leader has taken a number of steps to raise the children's skills and knowledge. The outdoor area has been completely redesigned. The children are correspondingly making better progress in developing their physical skills and their personal, social and emotional skills.
- The key focus has been on enhancing children's speaking and listening skills. Improving the children's spoken language, widening their vocabulary and enabling them to listen with understanding are central to all aspects of teaching and learning in the Reception Year. Boys and disadvantaged children are making better progress this year. The proportions of children already meeting the early learning goals across the curriculum are higher than they were at this time last year. However, further increasing the proportion of children who attain a good level of development remains an area of improvement for the school.
- Pupils make strong progress in mathematics. When I visited lessons with the deputy headteacher, I saw teachers consistently implementing the strategies that were introduced following the previous section 5 inspection to improve the effectiveness of mathematics teaching. These included:
  - the expectation that all pupils will gain at least the skills and knowledge appropriate for their ages
  - pupils studying each topic in depth and having time to think about their mathematics work
  - pupils talking with one another about their work in mathematics
  - additional same-day support for pupils identified as having struggled in the mathematics lesson.

Published information on pupils' performance shows the positive impact of these strategies. Pupils currently in the school are continuing to make strong progress in mathematics.

- Pupils' progress in reading in key stages 1 and 2 has not been as strong as in mathematics in recent years. The two subject leaders for literacy have addressed this relative weakness by working to change pupils' attitudes towards reading. They identified that many pupils were reluctant readers. To remedy this, they have improved the quality of books in the school library and built 'Love for

Reading' sessions into the afternoons. Pupils appreciate these developments and the rewards they receive for reading regularly.

- In order to improve pupils' reading comprehension skills, the literacy leaders changed the way in which these skills are developed. Skills such as how to skim and scan a text, how to predict what will happen next in a story and how to infer meaning are taught explicitly. Teachers now ensure that pupils practise these skills regularly. Pupils are now making stronger progress in reading than in previous years. However, the proportion of pupils exceeding the skills expected for their ages is below what the school is aiming for and remains an area for improvement.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- high-quality teaching in the Reception Year enables a greater proportion of children to attain a good level of development
- high-quality teaching of reading and writing stretches the most able pupils and so increases the proportion of pupils who have skills exceeding those expected for their ages.

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

Anthony O'Malley  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During this inspection, I met with you, the deputy headteacher and other members of staff to discuss the school's effectiveness. I also had a discussion with three members of the governing body. I met with a group of older pupils to find out about their views of the school. I talked with other pupils as I met them around the school and in lessons. I observed teaching and learning throughout the school. I looked at work in pupils' books and heard six children read.

I considered numerous documents, including those linked to keeping pupils safe, the school's self-evaluation document and the school's improvement plan. I took into account 10 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire and seven written comments from parents and carers and gathered their views as they brought their children to school. I also considered the views of 47 members of staff and 75 pupils who completed their online questionnaires.