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Mrs Rebecca Timperley  
Headteacher  
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Derbyshire  
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Dear Mrs Timperley

### **Short inspection of Northfield Junior School**

Following my visit to the school on 9 October 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 January 2015.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You are a conscientious headteacher who leads the school with determination and empathy. You and the governing body are highly committed to leading an inclusive and caring school. Staff are supportive of each other and work with a common purpose. They say that they are proud to work at Northfield and are confident in your leadership.

You have an accurate understanding of the school's effectiveness. You base this on a well-considered self-evaluation and comparisons against national benchmarks. The school's improvement plans focus sharply on areas for improvement. Plans are precise and contain ambitious targets. Success criteria are well defined to measure the impact of leaders' effectiveness. Other leaders ably support you in improving the identified areas.

You have maintained the strengths of the school identified in the previous inspection. In particular, disadvantaged pupils continue to make good progress and achieve well. Writing remains a strength of the school. In particular, pupils' exercise books show great care in, and attention to, handwriting skills. The school continues to provide pupils with a broad and balanced curriculum. A high priority is also placed on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. You encourage pupils to be resilient, curious and keen learners. Pupils continue to be well prepared for life in modern Britain.

You have taken effective action to ensure that the quality of teaching and learning

remains good. Teachers provide activities that interest and motivate pupils. They use assessment well to identify gaps in pupils' learning and provide tasks that are mostly well matched to pupils' needs. At times, however, activities do not challenge some pupils well enough. Teachers and teaching assistants use questioning well to check pupils' understanding. Sometimes questioning is also used to make pupils think harder.

You have created a caring and nurturing ethos throughout the school. Pupils are polite, friendly and thoughtful. They welcome visitors and show a great deal of respect towards adults and each other. Pupils enjoy learning in the pleasant and well cared for learning environment. They are eager to talk about their wide and varied learning opportunities. Pupils spoke with enthusiasm about the numerous extra-curricular activities they can take part in. As well as many sports-based clubs, pupils can also attend gardening, art and cooking clubs to learn new skills. Pupils' positive attitudes and good behaviour continue to support their learning well.

The governing body provides you with strong support. Governors have an accurate and comprehensive view of the school. They bring different experiences and a range of skills to their roles. Governors keep their knowledge up to date through appropriate training and networking with other governors. They make regular visits to the school and keep a careful check on pupils' progress and attainment. The governing body holds you, and other leaders, to account to ensure a good-quality education for pupils.

You have achieved the recommendations for improvement following the school's last inspection. Teachers are adept at spotting pupils' misconceptions. These are rectified quickly so that pupils are able to progress with their learning. Leaders have also reviewed the school's marking and feedback policy, which teachers apply consistently. Pupils appreciate teachers' feedback. They showed me examples of how teachers provide opportunities for them to improve and better understand their learning.

Parents and carers value the work of the school. They attend parent learning sessions and play an active role in their children's learning. Parents expressed how easy it is to contact the school and talk about their children's learning.

You are not complacent about the successes you have had in improving areas of the school's effectiveness. You are resolute in your drive to rectify any variations that arise in pupils' learning. We discussed the next steps required to enable the school to improve further. Overall, pupils' progress in reading is good, but some groups of pupils do not make as much progress as others. This is especially true for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. In addition, teachers do not challenge some of the most able pupils consistently in their learning.

**Safeguarding is effective.**

Safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You ensure that safeguarding has a high profile throughout the school. Appropriate employment checks ensure that staff and volunteers are suitable to work with children. Members of the governing body make regular checks on all safeguarding practices.

As the designated teacher for child protection and safeguarding, you keep staff well informed about safeguarding matters. Staff are vigilant in their daily practice. They told me that they feel well prepared to take action if they have a concern that a pupil may be at risk. You establish positive links with parents and external agencies when accessing any extra support pupils may need. Concerns are followed up diligently to help make sure that pupils are kept safe.

Pupils were keen to tell me that they feel safe at school. They explained to me how the school helps them to understand about the hazards of using the internet. Pupils understand the different forms of bullying and racism. They said that there is very little of this type of behaviour in their school. The vast majority of parents who responded to Parent View said that their children feel safe. They made particular reference to staff 'going the extra mile' to ensure that their children are safe and happy at all times.

### **Inspection findings**

- Pupils typically make good progress in reading. Last year, however, leaders identified that pupils' inference skills were not developing as well as other reading skills. Leaders took quick action to remedy this. During guided reading, observed during the inspection, pupils worked conscientiously to develop their inference and deduction skills. Most activities are well matched to pupils' needs. However, at times, teachers do not challenge the most able pupils enough. Reading quizzes, resident authors and a new library have helped to raise the profile of reading. Leaders' actions to improve reading have been successful. Overall, pupils' progress in reading has improved, following a dip in 2017.
- The pupils whom I listened to reading did so with fluency and confidence. They used their inference skills well to show a sound understanding of what they had read. All pupils spoken with during the inspection told me how much they enjoy reading. They particularly expressed how much they enjoy the weekly family reading mornings.
- The proportion of middle-ability pupils who make good progress in mathematics has increased. Leaders have ensured that teaching places a greater emphasis on the middle-ability pupils. Teachers provide more opportunities for pupils to develop their reasoning skills and explain their mathematical understanding. In 2018, middle-ability pupils made more progress and attained higher standards than middle-ability pupils have previously done. Leaders have now begun to take action to rectify the recent dip in progress that has arisen for the most able pupils.
- Leaders provide pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities with effective support. Each year group has a number of pupils with specific learning needs. Leaders,

teachers and teaching assistants respond well to the needs of these individuals. This does, however, make it difficult to compare pupils' outcomes year on year. Pupils told me how much they appreciate the extra support that teachers and teaching assistants provide. They proudly showed me their books and explained what helps them learn. Typically, pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress. Their progress in reading, however, shows some variation across the school.

- The attendance of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is good. Leaders' actions to support a small number of individual pupils who are persistently absent have been effective in improving their attendance.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that teachers:

- embed the new approaches to the teaching of reading and further improve pupils' progress, especially the progress of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities
- consistently provide the most able pupils with challenging activities that make them think harder.

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

Vondra Mays  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I discussed leaders' self-evaluation of the school, and shared my key lines of enquiry. I held meetings with a range of staff, including the headteacher, the senior teacher and the literacy leader. I also met with several members of the governing body. You and I jointly observed pupils' learning in several lessons. I observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and around the school. I spoke with pupils informally and met formally with two groups of pupils. I also listened to pupils in Year 4 and Year 5 read and examined samples of pupils' work.

In addition, I considered a range of documents. These included the school's improvement plan and records relating to pupils' progress, attainment and attendance. I considered parents' responses to Ofsted's online survey and the school's own pupil and staff surveys. I reviewed the school's safeguarding practices. The school's website was also checked to confirm whether it meets the

requirements on the publication of specified information.