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Mrs Louise Mansell and Mrs Jo Cripps
Co-Headteachers
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Dear Mrs Mansell and Mrs Cripps

Short inspection of Church Gresley Infant and Nursery School

Following my visit to the school on 24 May 2017, 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 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. As well as a move into a newly built school, there have been many staff changes in this time, including your appointment as co-headteachers in September 2016. You have worked together closely to ensure that the best interests of the pupils are at the heart of all you do. This is reflected in the positive views of the school expressed by pupils and by the large majority of parents who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and who spoke to me on the playground. Many parents commented on the care and commitment of the staff who go 'above and beyond' what is expected.

Pupils enjoy school and are polite and well behaved. They arrive at school with a smile and carry this through the day. One parent said, 'my child would go to school on the weekends if she could'. Pupils know that they can rely on staff to listen to them and relationships between staff and pupils are warm and respectful.

Staff know what you are aiming to achieve as a school: to ensure that pupils believe in themselves and achieve the best they can. You and other leaders monitor the quality of teaching and pupils' progress regularly. Staff act upon advice given and so improve their effectiveness. You are both ambitious for the school and have identified what you need to do next to improve the quality of education further.

The high-quality environment is enhanced by bright and interesting displays of pupils' artwork and writing that show that the efforts of all are valued. Since the previous inspection in 2013, you have improved the curriculum to ensure that pupils develop a wider understanding of others. Contacts with a school in Sri Lanka and another closer to home, as well as visits from members of a Maasai tribe, have motivated and enthused pupils. The annual focus week, when all classes learn about a different country and share their learning with others, is very well regarded. The curriculum promotes British values of tolerance, respect and care for others. For example, in the Reception classes, children were learning that, although crayons have different colours, they all do the same job and need to work together. The children were able to understand this concept in relation to their own lives.

At the school's previous inspection in June 2013, you were asked to ensure that teachers engaged pupils more actively in their learning. Working with staff and external trainers, you have addressed this very successfully. As we walked around the school together, we saw: children in the Nursery balancing teddy bears 'on top of' their heads as they learned position words; pupils in Year 1 accurately grouping words which sounded the same but were spelled differently; and pupils in Year 2 providing the actions for a story they had written together, effectively developing their use of vocabulary and sentence structure.

Pupils are now more confident writers. Most are developing a clear handwriting style that enables them to write more fluently and at greater length. You recognise that there is more work to be done to ensure that the move from printing to joined handwriting is smoother. Outcomes in the phonic screening check at the end of Year 1 improved in 2016 and were in line with national averages. This improvement looks set to be maintained this year. Pupils are using their increased knowledge to have a go at spelling words that are more complex. However, spelling is still a weaker area of their written work and prevents some from achieving the expected standard at the end of Year 2. You have recognised this and are considering appropriate ways to address the issue as a whole school.

Pupils have good number skills and you have been working to develop their problem-solving and reasoning skills. You have discovered that while they can solve problems, they cannot always explain their reasoning sufficiently well. On looking at pupils' books, we agreed that some pupils are also not able to explain their ideas fully when they write a story or respond to a text they have read. This is particularly true for some boys and disadvantaged pupils. We agreed that further improvements are needed to pupils' speaking and reasoning skills in order to have a positive impact on standards in all subjects.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team and the governing body have ensured that all safeguarding requirements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding within the school. Staff are vigilant because of the regular and effective training that you provide. You ensure that there are systematic checks as part of staff recruitment and for visitors, volunteers, governors and supply staff.

Pupils say that they feel safe. They are able to explain what to do in the event of fire and how to keep themselves safe when around water. They understand how to use the internet and mobile devices safely. All of the staff and the vast majority of parents who responded to the online questionnaires say that pupils are safe.

You, as the designated safeguarding leads, along with the child and family support officer, have developed strong links with the relevant outside agencies. Records of concerns and subsequent actions are detailed and thorough and pupils receive the help and support they need in a timely manner. You give a high priority to ensuring that pupils attend school regularly and on time. You recognise that there is more work to be done to ensure that some disadvantaged pupils attend school as regularly as other pupils do.

Inspection findings

- Improvements to the quality of teaching are managed well. Some staff have had the opportunity to see excellent practice in other schools and have then used this to improve opportunities for their own pupils.
- The proportion of children reaching a good level of development by the end of the early years improved considerably in 2016 and was broadly average. The proportion of children reaching the higher levels also improved. These outcomes represent good progress, as most children enter the school with skills below, to well below, those typical for their age. However, the proportion of boys and disadvantaged pupils reaching the good level of development was below the national average, mainly because of weaker communication and literacy skills.
- The early years leader has implemented changes to the way teachers plan and give additional support to children in order to quicken their progress. These changes are having a positive impact, although it is likely that outcomes for boys and disadvantaged pupils will be lower than the national average again this year.
- You have recognised that there are some relative weaknesses in the progress and performance of disadvantaged pupils. You have looked at how you use the additional funding for these pupils; as a result of well-targeted actions, including an additional teacher and catch-up programmes, their progress is accelerating further. This group rightly remains a priority for you.
- The teaching of phonics is now a strength of the school, as evidenced by the increased proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard by the end of Years 1 and 2. Phonics teaching is helping pupils to feel more confident when reading independently. However, you have noted that there now needs to be further work to ensure that all pupils fully understand what they are reading.

- Last year's national assessments show that pupils made good progress in reading and mathematics by the end of key stage 1 in relation to their starting points at the end of early years. Progress in writing was broadly average. You recognised this, and teachers are now using whole-class oral rehearsal strategies to support pupils' vocabulary and sentence structure. Pupils' books show that this strategy is enabling them to make good progress in many facets of their writing. Improving spelling is now your priority.
- You have a wealth of assessment information gained from regular reviews of pupils' progress. You recognise that there is more work to be done to ensure that your tracking systems enable you to have a clear and readily available overview of the progress and attainment of different groups of pupils.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers improve pupils' speaking and reasoning skills, particularly those of boys and disadvantaged pupils, so that they are better able to reach the expected levels and beyond in writing and mathematics
- there is a whole-school strategy to improve pupils' spelling and so raise achievement in writing.

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

Joanne Sanchez-Thompson

Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

We visited classes together to observe teaching, learning and assessment. I checked pupils' progress in their books, talked formally with a group of pupils from Year 2 and talked informally with pupils in lessons and around the school. I met with parents at the beginning and end of the school day.

We discussed the school's effectiveness and what actions you have taken to ensure that the school continues to improve. I also met with the leaders for literacy and the early years, the pupil premium leader, and four governors, including the chair and vice-chair of the governing body. I met with a representative of Derbyshire County Council to find out about the local authority's view of the school.

I reviewed a range of documents, including your evaluation of the school's effectiveness, your school improvement plans and external evaluations of the school's work. I also scrutinised the school's safeguarding systems, records and associated documents. I checked your assessment information on how well pupils are achieving. I also read minutes of meetings of the governing body. I considered 46 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View), 27 free-text comments from parents and 38 responses from staff.