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Mrs Rebecca Chapman
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Chapman

Short inspection of Norbury CofE Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 15 May 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 February 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. This reflects the dedication and energy both of school leaders and of staff. These characteristics are exemplified by your own decision to teach full time for four days a week in order to ensure high-quality teaching and learning throughout the school.

The school's motto, 'Laughter & Learning', inspires pupils and staff to make your school a special place. Staff and pupils are enthusiastic, confident and friendly. Whether learning in classrooms or outdoors, it is clear that they enjoy being part of the Norbury family. One parent captured the distinctive qualities of the school when she commented, 'My children attend Norbury Primary and they absolutely love it! They are always raring to go in the morning, skipping in to see their teachers, and have a beaming smile when I pick them up at home time.'

Visits to lessons and the work in pupils' books highlighted how well teachers and teaching assistants work together so that pupils in the mixed-age classes learn effectively. Throughout lessons, they keep a close eye on how individual pupils are getting on. This enables them to provide additional support or challenge as necessary. Staff overwhelmingly agree that the school has improved significantly since the last inspection. They point to: helpful links with other schools to share and gain ideas; very effective developments in the teaching of phonics, reading and mathematics; an increase in full-time staffing and reorganisation of the mixed-age classes; better use being made of information gathered through regular assessments of pupils' progress.

You and your staff make excellent use of the school's wonderful location by ensuring that pupils have plenty of opportunities to learn in the range of outdoor areas, including the nearby forest. These opportunities are always thoroughly planned, with clear learning outcomes. During my visit, for example, I saw older pupils working in the school grounds, successfully tackling challenging mathematical problems that could not have been organised as effectively inside the school building.

Governors have a strong range of skills and experience. They carry out their roles and responsibilities well, striking the right balance between challenge and support. Members of the governing body visit the school often to support your work and that of other leaders. They are proud of the place the school has at the heart of the community it serves. They have a good understanding of the school's strengths and where it still needs to do better.

You and other leaders have successfully addressed the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. In mathematics, a new approach to assessment means that teachers now are clear about gaps in each individual pupil's mathematical understanding. Teaching directly addresses these gaps. Pupils enjoy the weekly tests which challenge them to beat their previous score and which identify their next learning steps. There is more emphasis now on improving the pupils' mental arithmetic skills. As a result, pupils' knowledge of number bonds and the multiplication tables is much stronger.

The previous inspection recommended that the quality of subject leadership across the curriculum was strengthened. Your links with the local teaching school alliance have enabled staff to meet with colleagues from other schools and gain ideas about how leadership can secure effective teaching and learning in a range of subjects. As a result, the quality of leadership overall has grown in expertise, experience and confidence. Leadership in music is a particular strength. Leadership expertise in computing and art and design is, by comparison, less effective.

You are keen to build upon the improvements made since the previous inspection. For example, you recognise that with higher ambition more of the most able pupils could reach the highest standards at the end of Reception and Year 2. Improving the progress of pupils who are struggling with phonics is also an area for development. At present, they do not have sufficient access to reading books that match well with the knowledge and skills they are gaining in phonics lessons. Finally, you understand the importance of checking more closely what pupil performance information tells you about the comparative performance of boys and girls. This will enable you to identify and address any evidence of underachievement, for example boys' progress in writing, promptly.

Safeguarding is effective.

The designated safeguarding lead and governors ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. The well-being of pupils is their highest priority.

Pupils are confident that all of the school's staff do all that they can to keep them safe. Pupils speak positively about visitors to the school, such as firefighters and representatives of organisations such as the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children and the Dogs Trust. They have regular guidance on how to stay safe online and how to deal with situations that make them feel uncomfortable.

Staff know the school community well. This helps them to work effectively with families and local organisations. The most vulnerable pupils receive prompt and appropriate support.

Staff and governors receive regular safeguarding training. As a result, they are up to date in their knowledge and understanding.

Inspection findings

- In 2017, teaching of the youngest children in the school was reorganised to reduce the size of the class and the span of ages. Reception children and Year 1 pupils now form a single class. The teacher and the teaching assistant are highly skilled and ensure that the differing needs of both groups are met in the classroom and in the exciting outdoor learning areas. The proportion of Reception children who attained a good level of development improved considerably in 2017. It was above the national average. However, as in previous years, the proportions of pupils exceeding the early goals in writing and reading were below the national averages. Increasing these proportions is a next step for the school.
- You responded promptly to the disappointing outcomes in the phonics screening check taken at the end of Year 1 in 2017. You introduced a new approach to teaching phonics and provided all necessary training for staff. Current pupils in Reception and Year 1 are making good progress in phonics because of these changes. There is additional support for all of the pupils, currently in Year 2, who did not meet the expected standard in the phonics check. They receive intensive additional phonics teaching and are heard reading each day. However, the pupils' reading books do not match well with the phonics the pupils are learning in school. This means that some pupils struggle to read their books and are not practising at home the phonics knowledge and skills they are learning in school.
- By the end of Year 2, the proportions of pupils who attain the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics are typically close to the national averages. However, in 2017, no pupils attained greater depth in these subjects. Raising expectations of what the most able pupils in key stage 1 are capable of is a next step for the school.
- In 2016, there was dip in the progress pupils made in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of key stage 2. The proportion of pupils attaining the expected standards in all of these subjects was below average. In response to this, you made changes to staffing and the organisation of teaching in key stage 2. You took personal responsibility for teaching the Year 4, Year 5 and Year 6 pupils and reviewed the curriculum to make sure that pupils were well prepared for the Year 6 assessment tests. These changes had a very positive impact.

Progress and attainment were much higher in 2017. Visits to lessons and work in pupils' books show that these improvements are being sustained.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers have high ambition for what the most able pupils can achieve by the end of Reception and key stage 1 so that greater proportions of pupils exceed the standards expected for their ages
- pupils who are learning phonics have plenty of reading books that match well with the knowledge and skills they are gaining in phonics lessons so that they can practise their skills, experience success and gain confidence as readers
- careful checks are made on the progress of boys and girls so that any evidence of a trend of underachievement by either group can be identified and promptly addressed.

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

Anthony O'Malley
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and other members of your senior leadership team. We discussed the school's self-evaluation, information about pupils' progress and improvements made since the previous inspection. I also met with two members of the governing body.

I observed pupils in classrooms and spoke with them about their learning. I looked at work in pupils' books from across the curriculum and heard pupils read. I looked at a range of written evidence, including documents relating to safeguarding and attendance. I spoke with parents and carers at the start of the school day. I took account of the views expressed by 55 parents who completed the online survey, Parent View, as well as their written comments. I also considered the views of seven members of staff and 17 pupils who returned their questionnaires.