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Mrs Alison Dugdale
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Dugdale

Short inspection of Middleton Community Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 15 November 2016, 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 March 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You took up your post as headteacher less than three years ago. Since your arrival, you have successfully raised the expectations of the staff and governors, so that all share your vision of valuing every child and embracing the outdoor environment as part of creating memorable learning experiences.

Since the last inspection, you have focused sharply on improving the quality of teaching and learning in order to improve outcomes for pupils, particularly in writing and mathematics. Teachers make sure that lessons have clear success criteria for pupils, so that they understand what they are learning. Teachers provide an appropriate level of challenge for pupils of all abilities. During our tour of the school to see learning taking place, I observed pupils completing challenging problem-solving and reasoning tasks in mathematics. The older most-able pupils were deep in discussion about how they would tackle the task at hand and how they could make use of the skills that they had learned previously.

Teaching assistants were offering effective support, through precise questioning and clear explanations, to ensure that the pupils made the progress of which they were capable. Not willing to be complacent, you continue to push for improvements to ensure that the quality of teaching is as effective in all lessons

as it was in the best examples we saw.

Pupils' books show that teachers use well the marking policy that you have introduced and this is leading to improvement in the quality of pupils' work over time. You have rightly recognised that, while improvements in outcomes have been achieved in writing, there is still work to do to improve outcomes further in mathematics across the whole school.

The school's assessment information and other published data show that, where you have focused your attention on bringing about improvements, outcomes have improved. For example, you introduced a systematic approach to the teaching of phonics. Pupils' achievement in phonics by the end of Year 1 has been above that seen nationally for two years. Similarly, improvements that you have made in the approach to teaching writing have paid dividends. By the end of key stage 2, the progress that pupils had made from their starting points was in line with that seen nationally in 2016. In key stage 1, in 2016, the proportions of pupils attaining the expected level and of those working at greater depth in each of reading, writing and mathematics were higher than those seen nationally.

The school's assessment information shows that pupils made good progress over the course of last year in each year group; however, published information shows that progress from their starting points in mathematics and, to a lesser extent in reading, was low. This was a small cohort of pupils, some of whom joined the school within the last year. You have identified precisely the reasons for the apparently low progress and have already taken appropriate steps to improve rates of progress.

You have revised the approach to teaching mathematics and ensured that those pupils who begin to fall behind are identified quickly, so that they can receive the appropriate support. Your assessment information shows that this is proving to be successful in accelerating progress for pupils who benefit from these interventions.

You have provided parents with the opportunity to attend a mathematics morning, so that they can understand how to help their children at home. The parents are supported further by a range of information available to them on the school's website. Subject leaders organise additional clubs for pupils who would benefit from extra help. During our tour of the school to see the learning that was taking place and from my scrutiny of pupils' books, it was evident that pupils who are currently in school are making good progress in mathematics this year.

Pupils' attendance has improved since you took up your post as headteacher. It is now above the national average for primary schools. This is an improvement on previous years. You have identified those pupils whose attendance is lower than you would like it to be and those who are persistently absent. You have considered why this has arisen and offered appropriate support to improve the situation.

The importance of using the environment in learning is inherent the ethos at Middleton Primary School. Pupils told me that they especially enjoy their 'forest school' sessions because 'it is important to learn about nature'. Older pupils told me they learn to tie knots and to solve problems together. Each class has responsibility for taking care of the school's chickens and plans are afoot to build links with the Derbyshire Wildlife Trust, which has taken up residence next door to the school.

Almost every parent who shared their views with me during my visit spoke very highly of the school. One parent described it as an 'extended family'. All parents agreed that their children are happy at the school.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding is the first item on the agenda of every meeting. This reflects the high priority that you place on ensuring that staff and governors are aware of recent updates to safeguarding practices and that keeping the pupils safe is at the forefront of everyone's mind. You have ensured that staff receive the necessary training, so that they know the signs to look out for and can raise a concern, if they have one, about a pupil's welfare. You have formed good relationships with external agencies which offer support to families where this is appropriate.

You make sure that all the appropriate vetting checks take place before new staff start working in the school. Your records are clear and kept securely.

You have ensured that pupils have the opportunity to learn about how to keep themselves safe. The local police community support officer comes into school to teach pupils about road safety, for example. Pupils in Year 6 learn to cycle safely through the 'bikeability' scheme. Pupils I met were able to explain about how to keep themselves safe when they use modern technology.

Inspection findings

- You, your senior leaders and your governors have an accurate understanding of the strengths of the school and what needs to be done to bring about further improvements.
- Leaders and governors have a precise timetable for monitoring the impact of the work of the school over the year. This means that governors and staff have an accurate view of what is working well and what can be improved.
- Pupils' books show that they are making good progress in English and mathematics this year. In mathematics, the teachers have focused on improving pupils' number skills this term. You have rescheduled assembly to allow more time for this, and the strategy is paying dividends. For example, the mathematics leaders have found that pupils are able to tackle problem solving more confidently, due to their improved grasp of number.

- In writing, pupils' books showed that they are making progress in their spelling, grammar and sentence structure. For example, one pupil had written, 'Omri slowly shut and locked the cupboard door. He thought he would pass out due to the tension.'
- A scrutiny of pupils' work showed, however, that books are not consistently presented neatly in writing, or in mathematics.
- You track pupils' progress carefully. Because cohorts of pupils are so small, you are able to do this on an individual pupil level. This means that you are able to target additional support precisely. You and your leaders check to make sure that the interventions are successful.
- You have restructured subject leadership in recent months. Many subject leaders are either new to the school, or new to leading their particular subject. Following the training that you have provided, leaders have an accurate understanding of what needs to be done to improve outcomes in their subjects.
- The subject leaders have clear action plans in place to bring the improvements about. Leaders are now able to monitor the quality of teaching and outcomes in their subject areas themselves.
- As pupils learn to read, they make good use of their developing skills in matching letters to the sounds that the letters represent. Pupils also use other cues, such as looking at a picture, to help them understand the text. The most able readers read with great expression and are able to talk about the different kinds of books that they enjoy.
- Pupils enjoy the extra-curricular activities that the school provides, including taking part in sporting events. Pupils have the opportunity to learn a variety of musical instruments, to take part in a residential trip and to participate in local visits. These visits include going to the theatre, or to the cinema to see a film as part of their learning during Black History Month.
- Pupils enjoy learning about democracy by voting for their classmates to represent them on the school council and by voting for which pupil will be the recipient of the greatly prized 'Middleton Cup'.
- The local authority has offered an appropriate level of support for the school, brokering consultants to help you bring about improvements to teaching. You have forged strong links with both Horsley Woodhouse Primary School and Sharley Park Community Primary School.
- The school's website meets the requirements for the publication of specified information for parents.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the current focus on improving teaching and progress in mathematics, spelling, punctuation and grammar is maintained, so that pupils achieve the

standards of which they are capable

- teachers have high expectations of the presentation of pupils' work
- subject leaders develop their skills, so that they can be held to account fully for the quality of teaching and progress in their areas of responsibility.

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

Di Mullan

Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I spoke with you, three subject leaders, and three other members of staff. I met with four members of the board of governors, including the chair, and with a representative of the local authority. I spoke with several parents and considered the views expressed by parents through the online survey, Parent View. I also considered the views of 16 members of staff through their online survey. There were no responses to the pupils' survey, but I met with eight pupils, heard two pupils reading, and spoke with pupils as you and I undertook a tour of the school to see the learning that was taking place in every class. I scrutinised pupils' books and documents relating to pupils' progress, school improvement, self-evaluation, and safeguarding, including the school's single central record.

This short inspection focused particularly on whether leaders had responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection, how well pupils make progress in reading and mathematics, how well leaders are improving the attendance of pupils who are persistently absent, and whether safeguarding is effective.