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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
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Mrs Claire Kent
Headteacher
Mount CofE Primary and Nursery School
Kings Road
Newark
Nottinghamshire
NG24 1EW

Dear Mrs Kent

Short inspection of Mount CofE Primary and Nursery School

Following my visit to the school on 27 February 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 December 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since you took up your post as headteacher, you have engendered a strong sense of teamwork across the school. Staff speak highly of your leadership. They know that you value and consider their views. They appreciate the messages of support and encouragement you share with them.

You, your staff and governors are very proud to serve the diverse community from which pupils come, and go to great lengths to make everyone feel welcome. Governors have ensured that the governing body is representative of the range of cultures and families that make up the school community. Parents and carers told me, 'The staff get us involved in our child's school life,' and pupils said, 'This school treats everyone the same.'

At the time of the last inspection, you were asked to make sure that staff provide pupils with work that is well matched to their ability and to enable pupils to extend their skills when they work on their own. Since then, you and your staff have raised your expectations of what pupils can do. As we visited the classes, we saw that teachers and teaching assistants use resources well to enable pupils to work independently or in small groups. Adults use their strong subject knowledge to provide pupils with clear explanations so that pupils can grasp new ideas. Pupils' books show that teachers provide pupils with additional challenges, particularly in mathematics. We noticed, however, that sometimes teachers do not plan carefully enough the additional challenges they provide to extend pupils' learning. In some instances, the additional challenge is just too easy for some pupils.

Published information shows that pupils make strong progress by the time they leave Mount Primary School at the end of Year 6. In 2017, the progress made in each of reading, writing and mathematics was within the top 6% of that seen nationally for pupils in key stage 2. Pupils also attained well. The proportion attaining the expected standard in mathematics was just below the national average, although more achieved the higher standard in mathematics than did so nationally. In addition, more pupils achieved the expected standard in both reading and writing than was seen nationally.

Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school. Those who spoke with me or responded to the online survey, agreed that their children are safe, happy and well taught at the school. On occasion, parents are welcome to join their children for lunch or for special assemblies where successes are celebrated. Parents appreciate the workshops you provide, for example relating to phonics, so they can learn more about how to help their child at home.

You have forged strong links with fellow professionals in the local area for the benefit of pupils and staff. Links with other local schools in the 'Together for Newark' network and through the Minster Teaching School Alliance have provided useful training for staff to improve their practice. During the inspection, pupils from Years 5 and 6 were visiting a local secondary school for a 'Future Careers' seminar.

Around school and in lessons pupils are generally well behaved. Those pupils who require additional help to modify their behaviour receive the support they need. Pupils are respectful of those whose home life or beliefs may be different from their own. Pupils enjoy taking responsibility, for example by helping younger pupils cut up their food at lunchtime.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding is a very high priority at the school and arrangements are fit for purpose. You have ensured that the already effective safeguarding procedures at the school have been tightened even further. Following a review of record-keeping, you have made sure that records are detailed and very well kept. The chair of the governing body samples safeguarding procedures frequently to check that they continue to be robust.

Staff and governors receive up-to-date training. Safeguarding matters are the first agenda item at staff meetings and all staff can attend so that no messages are missed. Staff understand well how to raise a concern about a child's welfare, should one arise. You call upon the expertise of external services where they might be useful to support a pupil or a family.

Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe, such as when they use modern technology. They also learn about other matters of personal safety, such as 'stranger danger'. They confidently told me that they are safe in school. They are certain that adults would deal with any rare instances of bullying.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection, I looked particularly at whether children in the early years and pupils in key stage 1 are making good progress. I also looked at how effective leaders' work to ensure pupils' regular attendance is.
- The proportion of children achieving a good level of development by the end of the early years rose sharply in 2017. Despite this, you and your leaders have identified that even more children could be achieving this milestone. Many children start in the Nursery or Reception classes with skills that are lower than would be typical for their age. School assessment information shows that children make good progress. Nevertheless, you have already taken action to improve this further. You have recently improved the way you check and track the progress made by children in the Nursery class. You and the early years leader are working towards ensuring that the system is as rigorous as it is in the rest of the school. This development is still in the early stages and it is too soon to judge the impact of this work.
- You and the early years staff have benefited from training and visiting other settings to seek out effective practice to help you improve your own provision. A recent focus has been to make sure adults have productive, high-quality interactions with children to ensure that they get the best from the activities on offer. During our visit to the early years classroom, we saw adults promoting children's vocabulary well. Children were having fun as they stuck labels of body parts, such as 'leg' and 'arm', on each other. They could use the picture on the label to help them, but the adult encouraged the children to read the word for themselves. Occasionally, children do not benefit fully from the activities that they can complete on their own, because adults do not make sure the children know exactly what to do.
- You and your staff have acted successfully to improve pupils' early reading skills. The improvements you have made to the organisation and teaching of phonics in key stage 1 have borne fruit. In 2017, there was a sharp rise in the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in the phonics check in Year 1 and in Year 2, so that it is now broadly in line with national averages.
- You also rightly noticed that by the end of Year 2, in 2017, pupils did not make as much progress as you expected and did not attain as well as in previous years, particularly boys. You have addressed this quickly by ensuring that these pupils receive additional support in Year 3. You have also analysed the reason for this dip. Teachers are now planning topics to engage boys as well as girls. The school's assessment information shows that pupils in key stage 1 are making stronger progress this year. In classes, we saw teachers and teaching assistants providing clear explanations to pupils and making effective use of resources to help pupils understand new ideas. However, we also saw that when tasks are not clearly explained, some pupils, particularly boys, do not concentrate as well as they should. Pupils' books also show that teachers do not routinely provide pupils with opportunities to practise the skills they have learned in English lessons by expecting them to write at length.
- You work extensively to promote good attendance. You evaluate carefully the rates of pupils' attendance, including for different groups of pupils, so that you can direct your efforts wisely and effectively. Pupils receive awards in assembly, for example for

coming to school regularly. You contact parents if their child is not in school, and if necessary you make home visits. You have provided support to several families to encourage and enable them to send their child to school every day. Attendance is at least in line with the national average for many pupils. Although the persistent absence of a very few pupils remains stubbornly high, overall attendance is improving.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they accelerate the progress pupils, particularly boys, make across key stage 1 by ensuring that teachers:
 - make more effective use of their assessments of what pupils know and can do, to provide pupils with tasks that engage them and effectively extend their learning
 - provide pupils with opportunities to write at greater length across a range of subjects, in order to help them practise and apply their writing skills in a wider range of contexts and to write for different purposes
- teachers and teaching assistants in the early years ensure that children understand what they are intended to learn so they get the best from the activities provided.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of Southwell, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Nottinghamshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Di Mullan

Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this short inspection, I met with you, three senior leaders and the school's business manager. I also met with four governors, including the chair of the governing body. I held a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority. I spoke with pupils informally as we visited every class together to see the learning taking place. I also spoke formally with a group of eight pupils and with several parents as they brought their children to school. I paid a short visit to both the breakfast club and the after-school club.

Together we examined a range of pupils' books. I also scrutinised a range of school documentation, including that relating to the safeguarding of pupils, the school's improvement plan and self-evaluation.

I considered the views of parents, pupils and staff through their responses to their respective online surveys.