

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mrs Catherine Robinson
Executive Headteacher
Dronfield Stonelow Junior School
Stonelow Road
Dronfield
Derbyshire
S18 2EP

Dear Mrs Robinson

Short inspection of Dronfield Stonelow Junior School

Following my visit to the school on 18 April 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 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

You have created a vibrant and welcoming ethos which staff, pupils and parents and carers are proud of. One parent summed up the view of many when they said, 'This is an amazing school with a positive and forward approach to learning. My children are thriving academically and personally.' Pupils told me that they enjoy coming to school and that it is an inclusive and friendly place to be. They told me, 'It doesn't matter what your background is; everyone is welcomed at our school.' Pupils are proud of the different roles and responsibilities that they take on, such as mini-leaders and ambassadors. They also enjoy contributing to the smooth running of the school by taking on assistant midday helper roles.

Pupils are confident, polite and articulate. They get on well together, work hard and enjoy socialising with each other. They told me that there is no bullying, but if there was, they are confident that it would be dealt with quickly and effectively. The school crossing patrol told me that the children are polite, courteous and follow instructions. If there are any concerns, these are swiftly followed up by school leaders.

Pupils behave well and work hard in lessons because teachers provide them with work that is engaging and stimulating. Teachers give pupils work that challenges them and makes them think carefully about their answers.

Pupils understand the school's recently introduced system for marking and told me

that it helps them to see for themselves how to improve their work. You have rightly identified that handwriting and the presentation of pupils' work need improving.

The school has just started its second year of working in collaboration with the neighbouring infant school, and many improvements have been made during this time. You and your head of school have a good understanding of what is working well and what needs to be improved. You have made sure that teaching has been strengthened through high-quality training, including the opportunity to observe your teaching. Middle leadership has been strengthened because there is a clearer understanding of roles and responsibilities. The school's plans for improvement are focused on the correct priorities. However, you recognise that plans need to be clearer about what actions will be taken and how the success will be measured.

The governing body has an accurate view of the school's performance and regularly challenges you to ensure the best possible outcomes for pupils. Governors are passionate and highly aspirational, spending time in school seeing for themselves how the school is doing and checking on the progress that is being made. However, increased use of published performance information would allow them to hold school leaders to account more effectively.

The governing body has made sure that there has been high-quality leadership to maintain stability for the school. However, the school's collaboration with the neighbouring infant school is reaching its end. At the time of my visit, the governing body was in the process of recruiting a new headteacher, but there is a plan to extend the collaborative partnership should the recruitment process be unsuccessful.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Records are thorough and comprehensive. There is a robust system in place to make sure that staff receive regular and varied training so that they know how to keep pupils safe from a wide range of risks.

The governing body understands its safeguarding duties and carries out regular checks to make sure that leaders are doing what they should to keep children safe. Children know how to stay safe when they are online and told me what they do to keep their online identity safe.

Inspection findings

- You have successfully increased rates of progress in mathematics. Pupils are routinely given work that challenges them because teachers plan work that matches pupils' abilities and deepens their thinking. Teachers have increased the range of resources they use when teaching mathematics. This means that pupils are able to visualise mathematical concepts by using apparatus, and this helps them to understand fully before moving on. Pupils have a good grasp of a wide range of mathematical vocabulary.

- Teachers regularly challenge pupils' learning in mathematics by asking challenging questions. Children are frequently being challenged to 'prove it' and 'solve it'. In one lesson, I observed a child ask their teacher a question, which the teacher answered by asking the pupil more questions. The end result was that the pupil answered his own question. This was typical of the effective questioning that you have developed in the school.
- You correctly identified the need to increase the proportion of pupils who achieve the higher standards in reading, mathematics and grammar. You have introduced a new way of setting targets for pupils that is based upon their previous achievements. Teachers now understand what children need to achieve if they are to make the progress that they should. However, leaders do not regularly check on the proportion of pupils who are making the progress expected of them and those who are doing even better.
- Extra support has been introduced for the most able pupils who are not making the progress that they should. The school's assessment information and work in pupils' books show that the proportion of pupils currently attaining the higher standards is much improved.
- Middle leaders understand their roles and responsibilities and carry these out effectively. They know what is working well and what needs to improve in their area of responsibility. However, they need to make greater use of published performance information to understand how school outcomes compare to those found nationally.
- Disadvantaged pupils are receiving individual support to help them catch up and reach the same standards as other pupils nationally. They have one-to-one discussions with their teacher so that they know what they are doing well and what they need to do to improve. You have set up a nurture group to ensure that pupils who need social and emotional support receive it. This means that more pupils are ready and able to learn.
- You have recently updated the plan that sets out how the school spends the additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils. The actions that it contains are appropriate and are beginning to have a positive effect. However, the plan needs to be clearer about how the effectiveness of each action will be measured.
- Attendance at the school is good. All groups of pupils have attendance rates that are in line with or higher than those found nationally. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent is lower than the national average. When leaders have concerns around absence, they work well with other agencies to provide the necessary support for pupils and their families.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils' progress is regularly reviewed to check that pupils are making the progress expected of them
- outcomes for disadvantaged pupils improve by providing targeted support to

accelerate progress

- there is effective use of a wide range of performance information to inform improvement actions and hold teachers to account for pupils' progress.

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

Vic Wilkinson
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you to discuss the school's self-evaluation and my key lines of enquiry. We also met to talk about attendance, safeguarding and progress for disadvantaged pupils. I met with the schools' leader for mathematics. I held discussions with pupils and listened to some pupils read. I observed playtime and lunchtime. I spoke with parents at the start of the school day. I met with a group of governors. I considered the responses of parents to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, and the views of staff and pupils. We visited all classes in the school together, spending a short time in each, and we looked at a sample of pupils' work. I reviewed a range of documents, including the school's improvement plan and the single central record and behaviour logs.