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Mrs Anna Upton  
Headteacher  
Chaucer Junior School  
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Derbyshire  
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Dear Mrs Upton

### **Short inspection of Chaucer Junior School**

Following my visit to the school on 9 January 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 March 2013.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

You have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. During that period, pupils' attainment and progress have always been at least in line with the national averages, and sometimes above. Chaucer Junior is an inclusive and friendly school that prepares its pupils very well for their secondary education. It is held in high regard by its local community. Parents who gave their views during the inspection, and those who left online comments on Parent View, were full of praise for your school. One comment captured their opinions: 'The school is well led and boasts an amazing team dedicated to improving the life of each individual child.'

You deserve much of the credit for the school's continued success. You are ambitious for the pupils. The expectation is that pupils will reach standards in reading, writing and mathematics that are at least as high as those of other pupils nationally. Year in and year out, you meet this goal because of your unstinting focus on sustaining and improving the good quality of teaching.

Your school's successes are not limited to good academic outcomes. Pupils and parents greatly appreciate the attention you pay to developing the pupils' personalities and interests. This aspect of your school's work is celebrated through displays in classrooms and around the school. You ensure that pupils encounter a wide range of interesting activities to broaden their horizons. The varied school clubs are too many to list, but particularly impressive is the gardening club. Over 90 pupils are members of this club and it has rightly received both national and local recognition.

The previous inspection asked you to provide more opportunities for pupils to use their mathematical skills across the curriculum. In the following years you ensured that in subjects such as science and geography pupils practised their number and measuring skills. Your current curriculum documentation highlights prominently how learning in mathematics can be threaded into different subjects. Within mathematics lessons themselves, the school is now implementing an approach where the large majority of pupils move through the national curriculum at the same rate. An impressive feature of your new approach is the prompt intervention provided for any pupils who may be struggling to keep up with their peers.

The previous inspection also asked you to provide opportunities for your strongest teachers to work alongside other colleagues. The readiness of staff to work together and support one another is now a real strength of the school. It underpins the high morale and commitment to teamwork that are so evident among all staff.

You remain committed to improving the school's effectiveness still further. For example, you recognise that in the 2017 reading test, the most able pupils did not achieve as well as they should at the end of key stage 2. Your analysis of their performance showed that even the best readers failed to respond confidently to questions which required them to 'read between the lines'. As a result, you have changed the way in which you teach reading comprehension. Pupils now have more opportunities to interpret a wide range of texts. Teachers routinely require them to justify their opinions about their reading. It is too early to be sure of the impact of the new approach. There are early signs, however, that more pupils are gaining and exceeding the reading skills expected for their age.

This focus on reading follows on from the priority you gave, in the previous academic year, to improving standards in writing. Discussions with pupils and examples of their written work showed the positive impact of your strategies for improvement. Pupils love the visits and visitors that are linked to topics that motivate them to be enthusiastic writers. Often the pupils' written work has a real purpose. For example, during our visits to lessons, pupils in one class were busy writing letters of complaint. These were going to be sent to the company that had supplied poor-quality snow globes, purchased as part of a fundraising event. There is some inconsistency, however, in the quality of written work in pupils' books. It is stronger in the older year groups. We noted that the younger pupils, particularly the lower-attaining pupils, struggle when teachers set them writing tasks that require knowledge and skills that are currently beyond them. This means that in some pupils' writing books it is difficult to see progress since the start of the school year.

Comments from parents included warm remarks about the high quality of support and care for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. Typically, pupils in this group make the same good progress as other pupils. The school, however, identifies a considerably greater proportion of pupils as requiring additional help than is usual. You agree that this probably represents over-identification. This means that the school may not always use its additional funding efficiently to support pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.

## **Safeguarding is effective.**

You have ensured that all safeguarding procedures are fit for purpose. Your recent commissioning of external expertise to check your policies and procedures shows your thoroughness in this vital area.

Staff receive the necessary training on how to keep children safe. They know exactly what to do if they have any concerns about a pupil's welfare. The school keeps appropriate records of any issues that arise, the actions taken and the impact of these actions. The governor with responsibility for safeguarding checks regularly that safeguarding procedures are robust and thorough.

Pupils say that they feel safe in school. They know that the school staff will do all that they can to ensure that they are safe both inside and outside school.

The curriculum provides pupils with important information about keeping safe and healthy. For example, it gives high priority to promoting mental health. The school's 'Anti-Stigma' ambassadors and the 'Listening Ear' box are just two of the ways that pupils can get help when they are anxious, sad or have difficulty coping with issues at school or at home.

## **Inspection findings**

- In 2017, pupils' progress in reading at the end of Year 6 was below that in writing and mathematics. This was because of the relatively weaker progress of boys and the most able pupils. You acted promptly to improve progress in reading. Boys, spurred on by initiatives such as 'dads and lads' events and rewards for regular reading, told me that they are now enjoying reading, both at school and at home. All pupils benefit from the transformation of the school's own library and the improved links with the local library. Crucially, in lessons across the curriculum, teachers promote the reading skills of inference and deduction. Pupils know that when possible they must 'APE' (answer, proof, evidence) when responding to questions. Visits to lessons and the school's information about current pupils' progress indicate that these strategies are helping all groups of pupils to be confident and competent readers.
- In September 2017, you arranged for an external review of the school's use of the pupil premium. You recognised that disadvantaged pupils were not making as much progress as others. The review made a number of recommendations. You have acted swiftly on these to improve the way you use the pupil premium and improve its effectiveness. For example, you now provide additional support for all disadvantaged pupils and not just lower-attaining pupils. Teachers and other staff now work more closely together when planning additional support. They identify the intended impact of the support and review progress towards the targets they have set. You check regularly on the progress of disadvantaged pupils in all classes. Information about their performance in the autumn term shows the positive impact of the actions you have taken.

- An important factor in the school's good performance has been the development of the roles played by other leaders. They play an important part in driving improvement in the areas for which they have responsibility. The strong links that you have with other schools in Derbyshire enable them to work and learn from other leaders. Your senior and middle leaders agree that you allow them to show initiative. This gives them the confidence to share ideas and to suggest how teaching and learning can be improved. The expertise, ambition and enthusiasm of your wider leadership team place the school in a strong position to keep on improving.
- In recent years, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities has been below the national average. You have successfully tackled this problem. Key members of staff, including the learning mentor and the special educational needs coordinator, know the school community very well. This enables them to support and, where necessary, challenge families as soon as there are signs that children are regularly missing school. Weekly attendance assemblies ensure that pupils understand the importance of good attendance. Currently, all groups of pupils have attendance rates of over 96%.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should:

- ensure that the new approaches to teaching reading comprehension lead to better progress for boys and to a greater proportion of pupils gaining reading skills that are above those expected for their age
- improve the way teachers develop pupils' writing skills in Years 3 and 4, particularly among lower attainers, so that they make faster progress
- revise how the school identifies which pupils have SEN and/or disabilities, to ensure that the additional funding provided for this group is accurately targeted and used efficiently.

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

Anthony O'Malley  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During this inspection, I met with you, the assistant headteacher and other members of staff to discuss the school's effectiveness. I also met with four governors and

spoke with a representative of the local authority. I met with a group of pupils and talked with others around the school and during lessons. I observed teaching and learning throughout the school. I looked at work in pupils' books.

I considered numerous documents, including those linked to keeping the pupils safe, the school's self-evaluation document and the school's improvement plan. I considered the 39 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, together with the views of parents as they brought their children to school. I also considered the views of 19 members of staff.