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Mrs Jane Townsend
Headteacher
Stocksbridge Nursery and Infant School
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Dear Mrs Townsend

Short inspection of Stocksbridge Nursery and Infant School

Following my visit to the school on 18 May 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 2011.

This school continues to be good.

You are a respected headteacher in the school community and among professionals locally, using your expertise to support leaders in other schools. You and your governors accurately evaluate the effectiveness of the school. This ensures that your plans bring about improvements for children in the early years and pupils in key stage 1. You have used targets effectively to help your teachers improve their practice. This has resulted in the quality of teaching being consistently good.

Your work with the city primary inclusion panel, advising leaders in other schools on strategies to support pupils with a range of needs, is based on the effective work done at Stocksbridge Nursery and Infant School. The school has gained the Inclusion Mark in recognition of the skilled work done in school to help pupils who have special educational needs or disability to succeed. Several parents identified the support their child has received as a strength of the school. Parents and staff are highly appreciative of the way the school is led and managed.

Across a range of subjects, teachers are teaching series of lessons that help pupils to deepen their understanding. Structures to support pupils' talk are having a strong impact on helping them to articulate and consolidate new ideas. This contributes to pupils' real enjoyment of learning.

In the previous inspection, you were asked to raise pupils' attainment in writing

and mathematics. In 2015, pupils attained levels above national averages in both subjects. Pupils also continued to do well in reading. Improvements over a three-year period mean that more pupils achieved the expected level in phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) than seen nationally. Although boys did less well than girls at the end of key stage 1, they attained higher levels than boys nationally in reading and mathematics.

The progress of current pupils is good. The most able pupils are making rapid progress, effectively demonstrating their understanding through extended pieces of written work, or through solving more-involved problems in mathematics. School assessment information shows that pupils who have special educational needs or disability are making progress in line with others in mathematics and reading.

This is an extremely caring environment. Teachers know pupils well and demonstrate real concern for pupils' well-being. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well promoted and is a strength of the school. Frequent teaching about values and participation in whole-school projects, for example on the Gambia, are helping to prepare pupils well for life in modern Britain. As a result of consistently high expectations, pupils' behaviour is good.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders ensure that safeguarding is rigorous in keeping pupils safe. Pupils are taught how to look after themselves through well-planned lessons, interwoven through all aspects of school life. Documentation is carefully kept and is followed precisely by staff. Risk assessments are very thorough and the work of leaders to ensure that children feel safe and happy is effective.

Inspection findings

- Your leadership is providing clarity and purpose to staff and pupils. You express ambition and the rigorous tracking of every pupil demonstrates your intention to provide the best education possible for every child.
- Leaders judge children to be entering nursery with skills slightly below those expected for their age. Following an upward trend, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development rose from just over half in 2014 to three quarters this year, putting attainment in the early years above national averages. Staff carefully track the progress of children, ensuring that assessment is up to date and informing planning for the next steps in their learning. Highly effective questioning by adults and the modelling of language are helping all children, but particularly the most vulnerable, to develop confidence and to talk freely.
- Leaders are very aware that there are gaps between the attainment of boys and girls in the early years. As a result, they have adapted planning and teaching to better meet the needs of individual children, exploiting their interests and regularly reviewing what they have learned. Themes have been carefully chosen, with much thought given to the learning environment to make sure that boys are helped to learn at the same rate as girls. However, provision is not fully effective in

ensuring that boys rapidly develop their skills in order to read and write at age-appropriate levels.

- Extra guidance and support has been well used to support pupils who are at risk of underachievement. Leaders carefully track the progress of all pupils. This information is showing that disadvantaged pupils are making good progress, but are working at levels slightly below that of other pupils.
- An area for development at the last inspection was to help pupils to improve their work through the marking and feedback provided by their teachers. Teachers have introduced clearer targets for pupils, helping them to understand better what it is that they are trying to learn. Pupils are regularly asked to correct spellings or to revisit a piece of work to check punctuation. However, despite being an intention of the school's marking policy, teachers' feedback is less effective in guiding pupils to further improve the content of writing, for example by adapting their style or varying their language.
- Since the previous inspection, leaders have done much to improve provision for science, thus raising pupils' achievement. Outdoor areas have been overhauled to provide exciting learning spaces for children in the early years. A forest area has been created and pupils regularly take part in 'welly days', spending the day immersed in learning in a natural environment. The middle leader for science has helped teachers to develop a practical science curriculum, offering lots of opportunities to experiment and experience cause and effect first hand. Pupils' science books record pupils' questions and their reactions to experiments, for example, 'What will happen to the candy canes when they are placed in different liquids?' It is clear from the class books that pupils are highly involved in these experiments and pupils' learning in science is equipping them well with scientific knowledge and skills.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers continue to improve the quality of feedback to pupils so that they understand what it is that they need to do to improve the depth and quality of their work
- provision in the early years is further enhanced so that boys are better prepared to read and write in order to enter Year 1 with the skills they need.

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

Yours sincerely

Lesley Butcher
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this one day inspection, I was able to discuss the work of the school with you and your staff. We visited classrooms together to observe teaching and learning. I was able to look at pupils' work in books and to speak with pupils throughout the day. Discussions with a representative of the local authority and three members of the governing body helped to provide additional information. School documentation, assessment information, policies and information posted on the school website were also taken into account. I looked at the Ofsted online questionnaire (Parent View) to gather 20 parents' views about the school and took into account the views of eight staff through online questionnaires.