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Mrs Pauline Marples
Principal
Skegby Junior Academy
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Dear Mrs Marples

Short inspection of Skegby Junior Academy

Following my visit to the school on 30 January 2019, 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 May 2015.

This school continues to be good.

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

In very challenging circumstances, you have created a calm haven where everyone feels valued. You provide exciting experiences, through your forest school for example, alongside teaching pupils valuable life skills such as resilience, risk-taking, being reflective, developing relationships, and resourcefulness, known collectively as your '5Rs'. Your intent to prepare pupils well for an ever-changing world is clearly evident and you are working hard to develop pupils' motivation and aspirations through the valuable work you are doing towards the Career Mark.

Since the last inspection, there have been some significant changes and many of the teaching staff are new to the school. When you joined the school in September 2017, you set higher expectations for pupils' behaviour and attitudes and quickly set about improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. You have successfully tackled areas for improvement and pupils' outcomes are improving. Although pupils' attainment is still lower than average, the progress pupils make from their starting points is in line with that of their peers nationally.

The Greenwood Academies Trust provides you with support and robust accountability. The chief executive officer knows the school well and is passionate about its role within the community. The trust is clear about what leaders need to do to improve it further and supports the school's improvement through regular

visits from its adviser.

Staff are proud to work at Skegby Junior Academy. They are enthusiastic and keen to make improvements. New and newly qualified staff are supported particularly well, so they settle in quickly and make good progress early in their career. All staff put new initiatives into place effectively and you have established systems that enable staff to support each other well. Their collaboration is evident in lesson planning and in pupils' books. It is helping to establish consistency in teaching.

Parents' views of the school are positive on the whole and most parents and carers appreciate the changes that have been made. One parent commented, 'They have turned the school around – the head is fantastic!' Parents of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) particularly appreciate the individual support that their children are given. The parents I spoke with were pleased with their child's progress and said that the school responds quickly and well to their concerns.

Pupils are extremely polite and friendly and conduct themselves well throughout the day. They are tremendously proud of their school. The group of pupils I spoke with said that one of the best things about their school is 'the relationships between people and friends'. They also like the special curriculum days and interesting activities, as well as visits that ignite their passion for learning. Pupils show good attitudes towards their learning, and it is clear that they take pride in their work as their books are presented to a high standard. Pupils were very proud of the work on display, such as their recent school writing competition entries, with many showing beautiful handwriting. Like you, they are extremely proud that many Skegby pupils had won prizes for their stories.

At the last inspection, leaders were asked to improve pupils' progress in reading by ensuring that pupils have more opportunities to apply their skills. It is clear that reading has been a huge focus in school and there has been much work to develop the pupils' love and enjoyment of reading. Pupils read often in lessons, from the daily 'Big Read' session to the end-of-day story. There is a busy new school library, attractively painted with the children's favourite book characters, which pupils visit regularly at breaktimes. Older pupils enjoy being library assistants and there are also adults present to hear pupils read. As a result, pupils' progress in reading has improved substantially. Leaders have also ensured that all teachers set tasks that stretch and challenge pupils of all abilities. This was evident in lessons and in pupils' workbooks. Pupils told me that they are always required to think and work hard and encouraged to 'put in maximum effort'.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding across the school. Safeguarding procedures are fit for purpose. Staff recruitment and checking systems are rigorous. The multi-academy trust makes regular checks on all safeguarding practices. Leaders work closely with other professionals and services to ensure that children and families receive timely and effective support. Record keeping is well organised,

and records are kept securely. All the parents and pupils I spoke with agree that pupils are safe in school and pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe, on the internet for example.

In previous years, the number of fixed-term exclusions has been above average. You have successfully reduced these through the clear expectations and nurturing support you have put in place for the small minority of pupils who present challenging behaviour.

Inspection findings

- Leaders are continuing to take effective action to improve pupils' progress in reading. Since 2016, pupils' average progress in reading has gradually improved from the lowest 20% nationally to be in line with the national average in 2018. Although still lower than that for pupils nationally, a much higher proportion achieved the higher standard of attainment in 2018.
- The pupils I spoke with say that they love reading and their reading has improved a lot. They understand the importance of reading regularly, including at home. There are many incentives on offer, but also systems in place to ensure that all pupils regularly read to an adult.
- Reading comprehension is taught daily in each class and pupils talk confidently about the different techniques they use. It is clear from the work in pupils' books that the depth of their analysis and their comprehension of texts are improving as a result. This correlates with the school's current assessment information, which shows that pupils are on track to achieve even better outcomes this year.
- Pupils' progress in mathematics is in line with national averages, but has not seen the same improvements as in reading and writing. Through the strategic deployment of adults to increase the progress of different groups of pupils, and by providing pupils with more challenging work, some most-able pupils did achieve the higher standard of attainment in 2018.
- Leaders are fully aware that attainment and progress in mathematics have plateaued, and they are taking action. As a result, teachers are more effectively assessing learning and using this information to identify gaps in knowledge and to set tasks that challenge pupils. Leaders have identified areas where further improvements are needed. Recently, they have ensured that pupils have regular opportunities to apply mathematics in solving real-life problems and have re-introduced daily mental mathematics practice.
- During the inspection, we visited mathematics lessons in all classes and pupils were working diligently to carry out processes appropriately demonstrated by their teacher or to tackle challenging problems. Using their assessments, teaching staff had set work that catered for the wide range of abilities. However, some pupils struggled or made errors when they were less fluent in their understanding of the mathematical concepts involved.
- The school has a very high proportion of disadvantaged pupils and receives significant pupil premium funding. Pupils' prior attainment is in the lowest 10% nationally and the language development, behaviour and attitudes to learning of

some pupils are below those typical for their age. This is particularly the case for disadvantaged pupils.

- The pupil premium funding has been used effectively in improving pupils' communication skills and attitudes to learning through the school's forest school. Pupils are thoroughly engaged by activities such as bug hunting, pond-dipping and cooking on a campfire and learning real-life skills. Pupils said that they learn 'how to survive' and how to look after living things. Pupils are developing the skills of resilience and reflection, for example, and this can be seen in their attitudes in lessons. Improvements in language and communication are evident in pupils' writing.
- Leaders have put in place additional support from teachers and teaching assistants to help disadvantaged pupils to catch up with their peers. However, the progress and attainment of some disadvantaged pupils continue to be weaker than those of other pupils in school.
- Through concerted action, attendance is improving. Last year, there was a spike in persistent absenteeism and absence rates had risen to above average, particularly for disadvantaged pupils. Evidence indicates that the school adopts a caring and diligent approach to following up absenteeism. Pupils are involved in devising innovative approaches and rewards, so that they fully appreciate the importance of good attendance. Current attendance data shows a significant improvement on the same period last year and that persistent absence has halved, to be in line with the national average.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they improve:

- pupils' learning in mathematics, so that more pupils achieve the standards expected of them and more achieve the higher standard
- the attainment and progress of disadvantaged pupils.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Nottinghamshire County Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Claire Stylianides
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you and three senior and middle leaders. I also met with the chief executive officer and a senior education adviser for the Greenwood Academies Trust. I spoke with the human resources director, the school's office manager and several teachers and support assistants. I visited all classrooms with you and examined a range of pupils' books. I spoke with pupils informally during lessons, on the playground and during a group discussion about their experience of school. I observed pupils' behaviour around the school, during playtime and in lessons.

I took into account the 12 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey. I spoke with a number of parents at the start of the school day and I looked at the school's own recent parent surveys. There were 13 responses to the Ofsted staff survey, which were also considered. I examined a range of documents, including safeguarding records and policies, the latest assessment information, a summary of the school's self-evaluation and its improvement plan, and information relating to pupils' attendance and behaviour.