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Mrs Sallyanne Dunstan
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Dunstan

Short inspection of The Vaynor First School

Following my visit to the school on 26 April 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 predecessor school was judged to be good in December 2010.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school. 'I cannot praise this school enough, my child has loved every single second so far and has flourished' and 'We feel the school embraces a nurturing environment where the children feel safe and thrive in their learning and development' were just some of the comments made by parents in their response to the Ofsted online questionnaire. These views were shared by most parents who spoke with me during the inspection.

The Vaynor First School became an academy in April 2012. Since this time, there have been substantial changes in leadership. You were appointed as the headteacher of the school in 2013. The assistant headteacher took on the role of deputy headteacher in 2013. Since 2013, three new teachers have been appointed to lead improvements in the early years, English and mathematics respectively. The executive headteacher left the trust in March 2016. There have also been significant changes in class teachers. At the time of this inspection, 10 out of the 15 class teachers were not working at the school when it became an academy.

You are an enthusiastic leader who is committed to ensuring pupils achieve well and become self-assured individuals. The deputy headteacher and staff share this commitment. You and the deputy headteacher have helped new staff settle quickly into the school and promote an ethos where staff work together well and learn from

each other. You, other senior leaders and staff regularly welcome staff from other schools to observe teaching and to discuss different aspects of school improvement.

Since your appointment as headteacher you have rightly concentrated on minimising the impact of staffing changes on pupils' learning. Your latest information about pupils' achievement and work in pupils' books shows that pupils make good progress in English and mathematics by the time they leave the school at the end of Year 4. Nevertheless, you correctly recognise that rates of progress are not as fast as they could be in a few classes because of inconsistencies in teaching. The actions you are taking to further improve teaching and to ensure pupils make consistently good progress are appropriate.

In September 2013, The Vaynor First School was formally linked with Crabbs Cross Academy and The Redditch West School Trust was established. Each school has its own local governing body. A group of directors hold the local governing body and school leaders to account for the quality of education each school provides. The members of the Vaynor local governing body know the school well and provide you with an effective level of support. They also ask pertinent questions about the difference staff are making to pupils' learning and personal development.

Safeguarding is effective.

The arrangements for keeping pupils safe are effective. All the parents I spoke with and all the parents who completed the Ofsted online questionnaire confirmed that their children are kept safe in school. The pupils I spoke with told me that staff listen to them and sort out any problems that they have. Pupils of all ages know how to keep themselves safe, such as when using the internet or crossing the road.

You meet regularly with the members of staff responsible for ensuring that the school's procedures for keeping pupils safe are effective. Together you make sure that all staff undertake relevant training and that prompt action is taken in response to concerns about individual pupils.

The local governing body makes sure that policies relating to safeguarding are up to date and that appropriate checks take place when new staff are appointed. Additionally, a member of the local governing body meets with you to make sure that staff are doing all they can to keep pupils safe.

Inspection findings

- You and the deputy headteacher have successfully managed the numerous changes in staffing and taken appropriate action in response to any weaknesses in teaching. The teachers with responsibility for subjects or specific aspects of the school's work value the guidance that you provide. Senior leaders work together well to help individual teachers to improve their practice and to further raise pupils' achievement.

- In 2015, the overall proportion of children achieving a good level of development at the end of Reception was above the national figure. In Year 1, the percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in the phonics check was similar to the national. At the end of Year 2, the proportion of pupils attaining the standards expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics was significantly above the national average. While this is a positive picture, your more detailed examination of these results reveals discrepancies between the achievement of different groups of pupils. For example, in the early years and Year 1, boys did not achieve as well as girls. In Year 2, disadvantaged pupils did not perform as well as their peers.
- The actions you have taken to close the gap in the standards attained by different groups of pupils are having a beneficial impact. Your analysis of pupils' achievement shows that boys and disadvantaged pupils are now making better progress and reaching higher standards than in the past and gaps in pupils' attainment are closing quickly.
- Visits to lessons, discussions with pupils and work in pupils' books show that staff plan activities which interest boys and girls. Pupils in Year 2, for example, were keen to talk to me about their topic, 'Things that go bump in the night'. Boys and girls were clearly enjoying writing. They were making sure that their writing made sense and that it was interesting for the reader. They proudly showed me their work, which included captivating descriptions of 'monsters' and 'monster machines'.
- You and other senior leaders keep a close check on the achievement of disadvantaged pupils. When you observe lessons, review pupils' work and meet with staff, you check that the support these pupils receive is making enough of a difference to their learning. If needed, the nature of support is changed quickly. This process is helping disadvantaged pupils to catch up with their classmates.
- Pupils are confident writers who use interesting vocabulary to express their ideas in different subjects. In Year 3, for example, pupils used the correct terminology to write about the mummification process, the River Nile and ancient Egyptian life. However, across the school, work in pupils' writing books shows inconsistencies in the presentation of pupils' work and the extent to which pupils spell correctly.
- Teachers successfully encourage pupils to add, subtract, divide and multiply with accuracy. Pupils have regular opportunities to deepen their mathematical understanding and to solve complex problems by using their knowledge of numbers, especially in Years 2 and 4. However, teachers in other year groups sometimes miss opportunities to deepen pupils' mathematical understanding. This occasionally prevents pupils from making accelerated progress in mathematics. Senior leaders intend to provide teachers with further support and training with this aspect.

- A few parents who spoke with me raised concerns about the lack of challenge for their children. You have worked well with staff to better meet the needs of the most-able pupils. The majority of teachers plan activities that successfully challenge pupils' thinking. In the early years, for example, staff display a variety of 'challenge cards' around the classroom. During the inspection, some children were enjoying completing a diary recording the growth of a bean. This activity gave the most-able children the opportunity to organise their ideas for themselves in short sentences.
- Pupils describe their lessons as 'fun' and 'enjoyable'. They respond enthusiastically to questions from teachers and teaching assistants. Staff encourage pupils to speak with confidence and to listen carefully. During my visits to lessons, I observed pupils listening thoughtfully to each other's responses during discussions and expressing their ideas articulately. In the playground, pupils play together well. They share playground equipment and make sure that everyone gets a turn during team games.
- Pupils have the chance to participate in a variety of activities after school. These include cheerleading, football, computing and art. Pupils and parents spoke positively about these clubs.
- The school curriculum gives pupils the chance to achieve well across different subjects. In addition to regular lessons, each term staff plan a week of activities which focus on one subject. To date, staff have organised science, art and computer weeks. These weeks give pupils the chance to study a subject in depth. At the end of each week, parents have the opportunity to attend a Saturday workshop and complete subject-specific activities with their children. The workshops give parents the chance to find out what their children are learning.
- Members of the local governing body and the directors of the trust have a secure understanding of the school's strengths and the actions that need to be taken to further improve the school. Senior leaders make sure that governors and directors are well informed about pupils' achievement and teaching. Governors and directors also meet with staff in order to discuss pupils' achievement and teaching. This enables governors and directors to effectively hold you and other senior leaders to account for pupils' learning. You are currently working with the local governing body to redesign the school website and to ensure that it contains all the necessary information for parents.
- The majority of parents who responded to the Ofsted online questions praised the work of the school. Parents' written comments complimented the work of staff, the support available for children with specific learning or development needs and the progress made by their children. A number of parents who spoke with me said that they valued the fortnightly newsletter because it provided helpful information about school events.

- A few parents who completed the questionnaire or who spoke with me raised some concerns. These included concerns about pupils' behaviour and too much homework. School records show that incidents of poor behaviour are infrequent and that staff take appropriate action when they do occur. The pupils I spoke with stated that they enjoy their homework, and especially the practical projects. Senior leaders regularly review the amount of work set by class teachers. They plan to take account of these latest comments from parents in the next review.
- The parent teacher association plays an active role in the school. They organise a range of successful fundraising events throughout the year. The money they raise goes to charities and contributes towards the cost of school equipment. The money raised has, for instance, paid for the physical refurbishment of the reading corners, the purchasing of a film studio and part-funding of a radio station.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils in all classes make consistently good progress
- all teachers make sure that pupils write neatly and spell accurately
- all teachers provide pupils with activities that extend and deepen pupils' mathematical understanding.

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

Yours sincerely

Usha Devi
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection I met with you, the deputy headteacher, other senior leaders, the chair of the governing body and three other governors. I had a telephone conversation with the chair of the trust. I spoke with pupils throughout the school day. The headteacher and deputy headteacher joined me on brief visits to all classes. We talked to pupils about their learning and reviewed samples of pupils' writing, mathematics and topic work. At the start of the school day, I spoke informally with parents. I also took account of the 63 responses on Parent View by the end of the inspection. I reviewed a range of documentation, including the minutes of local governing body meetings, the most recent information about pupils'

progress, the school's own evaluation of its performance, and documents relating to keeping pupils safe.