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Mrs K Miller
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Dear Mrs Miller

Short inspection of St George's CofE Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 11 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 July 2011.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Your vision that every child should achieve their potential is embedded across the school and is enthusiastically supported by governors, staff and parents. As a result, the school is a caring, happy and supportive environment, where learning in its widest sense is at the heart of daily life. Parents are very positive about the school and the way in which each child is treated as an individual whose needs are addressed sensitively.

The previous inspection report identified the need to develop more rigorous monitoring of pupils' progress in science. This has been done effectively. All teachers plan scientific activities, through the themed curriculum, that build on what pupils understand and can do. Indeed, a very effective feature of teaching in the school is the careful planning undertaken by teachers in all subjects to ensure next steps in learning are appropriate for all pupils.

Since the last inspection, you have developed the school's community and global links further. The school is involved in a range of exciting projects, including a Comenius/Erasmus biodiversity project and linking with schools in Tanzania. Pupils are enthused by the opportunities these bring to access new experiences and develop their understanding of wider global issues, as well as other cultures, traditions and beliefs.

You and your governors have a clear and accurate view of the school's strengths and where priorities for further improvement lie. The school's action plan identifies appropriate priorities for development, including improving pupils' progress in mathematics. The work undertaken to shift the focus of teaching to help pupils apply their mathematical knowledge through problem-solving is paying dividends. Pupils spoke of the many opportunities they had to apply and practise their skills. For instance, the youngest children used their understanding of number to make and sell cakes for charity, while older pupils used mathematical skills to budget for new library resources and in planning their contributions to a recent Hindu Festival Day.

Pupils enjoy coming to this school. They say that their teachers care about them and that they care about each other and this is evident in their interaction with one another. Older pupils take it for granted that they should look after younger children and the school encourages this through regular activities that involve all age groups working together. Respect and tolerance is well developed and older pupils are good role models for younger children, demonstrating a mature understanding of working and playing with others who may have particular needs.

Safeguarding is effective.

The school has well-developed safeguarding processes and procedures that go well beyond statutory requirements. Policies are up to date and implemented effectively and this underpins the culture of safeguarding in the school. The school works effectively with outside agencies to ensure that pupils receive the help and support they require, following up on actions taken frequently and rigorously. Written records are detailed and well organised. Staff make sure that even minor concerns for each pupil are noted, with a view to rapidly identifying any emerging problems and supporting early intervention.

Recruitment checks are rigorous and visitors are vetted carefully. Regular and appropriate training ensures that all staff understand their responsibilities and can carry them out effectively.

Pupils say that bullying is extremely rare and parents agree. One parent noted that when she did have concerns, they were addressed immediately, sensitively and effectively, involving both her and her child in the process.

Pupils have a good awareness of how to keep themselves safe. Older pupils were very well versed in the risks associated with social media and other forms of electronic communication and younger children spoke confidently about road safety, 'stranger danger' and reporting any worries they may have.

Inspection findings

- You and your governors know the school well. You are very clear about the improvements you want to achieve and the actions you will take to secure these. However, the school's improvement plan would benefit from greater clarity about how progress towards the planned outcomes will be measured.
- In this small school, your effective and collaborative leadership ensures that all staff are fully involved in improvement planning and take responsibility for implementing agreed actions. Teachers share and reinforce your aim of continuous improvement and strive to achieve the best outcomes possible for the pupils they teach. Teachers say that they are encouraged to develop new skills and that training matches their needs well, so that they are well equipped to meet your high expectations. Consequently, teaching is consistently good across all year groups.
- Teaching assistants are well trained and highly effective in the classroom. They use careful questioning well to support pupils to develop their independence, encouraging them to develop ideas and their use of language. As a result, pupils are resilient and can confidently explain what they have learned.
- Shortly before the last inspection, you reorganised early years provision to better reflect the needs of children, with Nursery and Reception children now taught together. This has had a positive impact on improving the personal development of both age groups. In the early years classroom, the younger children learned from their older peers and Reception-age children adapted well to support those younger than themselves. This is clearly reflected in the very good progress all children make in the many areas of learning.
- You have identified that, in the early years, number and writing have been areas of relative weakness, particularly for boys. As a result, the teaching of number has been reviewed and you have developed and introduced a 'Tool Box' approach. This has had very positive results and you expect that all children will achieve good levels of development in number this year. The daily teaching of letters and sounds is also bearing fruit. Work seen in children's books demonstrates the improved rates of progress made by children in their early writing skills.
- In 2015, the proportion of pupils who made expected progress by the end of Year 6 was below the national average. However, in this very small school, this represented two pupils for whom there were specific and documented reasons for their slightly slower progress. Although the proportion of pupils who made more than expected progress was broadly in line with the national figure in reading and mathematics, it was below in writing. Your analysis shows that this was due to the most-able pupils struggling to move from a level 3 to a level 6 and you have taken action to address this for future year

groups. Across the school, and particularly in key stage 1, pupils make good progress from their starting points. This is particularly the case for lower-ability pupils and those who have special educational needs or disability, who are very well supported to achieve their full potential.

- You have developed a new system for recording pupils' progress in response to national changes to the curriculum. Teachers are using this well to keep track of individual pupils' progress and to plan activities that meet their needs. Time and effort has been given to ensuring that parents have a good understanding of the new assessment information and what it is telling them about the progress their children are making. However, further work needs to be done to ensure that you can quickly identify where a particular group may be falling behind and to incorporate a range of information, including less formal assessment.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is of a consistently high standard. In the classroom, they demonstrate a thirst for learning and a strong desire to find things out for themselves, happily working independently and keen to share their discoveries with others. Around the school they are helpful to staff and each other, and eagerly undertake responsibility. The school council is actively involved in the daily life of the school and is influential in making changes. For instance, the council has recently requested changes to school dinners and has taken a leading role in achieving the outcome they wanted. Pupils have been involved in designing a new classroom and outdoor facilities and older pupils act as mentors to younger members of the school. Pupils frequently lead assemblies in which they share learning, experiences, ideas or issues that they feel are important.
- In 2015, attendance dropped to slightly below the national average. This was due to a number of factors linked to the school's decision to be as inclusive as possible, including those with complex needs, despite the impact it would have on attendance figures in such a small school.
- The wide range of sporting and cultural activities provided by the school is greatly appreciated by pupils and contributes to their personal development and readiness for the next stages in their lives. All year groups participate in the Forest Schools initiative and a range of educational visits, including to theatres. Pupils said there are clubs for cricket, football, music and young engineers as well as a breakfast club and after-school story club. Regular visitors to the school include the 'Pupils and Parliament' project which enables pupils to select topics to study and debate, such as 'drivers with phones' and 'the future of libraries'.

- Governors are uniformly committed to the school. They ensure that they have a wide range of relevant skills and experience to meet the school's priorities and have organised their committees to reflect these. They are very well informed about the quality of teaching because they visit the school regularly and can see this in action. Governors know precisely how additional funding is spent and the impact it is having on improving outcomes for pupils. They regularly survey staff, pupils and parents to ascertain their views of the school's work and act upon the information they receive.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- success criteria identified in the school's improvement plan are linked to measurable improvements to pupil outcomes and include milestones that enable leaders to assess progress precisely
- the improving outcomes for children in the early years are built upon and sustained over time, so that the excellent development seen in most areas is also achieved in reading, writing and number
- the new assessment system enables teachers to measure pupils' progress not only from starting points but also between fixed assessments, so that any groups which may be falling behind are rapidly identified, including the most able
- actions taken to increase the proportion of most-able pupils making more than expected progress at the end of key stage 2 are carefully monitored for their effectiveness, particularly in mathematics.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of Hereford and the director of children's services for Shropshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Mel Ford
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I discussed the work of the school with you. I observed pupils' learning in early years, key stage 1 and key stage 2. During these observations I spoke with pupils about their learning and looked at their work. I also met with a group of pupils and spoke to them about behaviour, safety, their learning and how they felt about their school. I met with teachers, governors and a representative from the local authority to talk about the work of the school, and with a group of parents about their views. I also took into account 19 responses to Ofsted's parent survey as well as the school's own surveys of parents, teachers and pupils.

During the inspection I looked at a range of school documents, including vetting checks on staff, minutes of governors' meetings, information about pupils' progress, attainment, behaviour and attendance, the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning.