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Mr Martin de Vine  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr de Vine

### **Short inspection of Cookley Sebright Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 12 July 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 2012.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You, your deputy and governors have a clear, shared vision for continuous improvement that is focused on securing the best outcomes for pupils. The school's mission statement says this is 'a place where we love to learn, look after each other and have fun'. Inspection evidence indicates that this has been achieved. Cookley Sebright is a 'happy' school; a word that is used by pupils, parents and staff alike when asked to explain what makes this school special to them. This is because you have established an ethos of caring that permeates the school. Pupils learn to care for one another in school, but also for those in the wider community, both locally and globally. The charitable links established with Gambian and Ugandan schools have enabled pupils to develop their understanding of very different ways of life; to become involved in fund-raising for others; and to appreciate their own educational opportunities.

The previous inspection report identified the need to improve the outdoor space for children in the early years. This has been done to great effect. The new buildings, completed in 2014, have enabled you to develop outdoor provision that is a well-organised, stimulating learning environment. Children use resources confidently and independently.

At the time of the last inspection you were also asked to improve the progress made by the most able in key stage 1. Since 2013, attainment overall has remained

above the national average for all pupils. The most recent assessment information, although not comparable to previous years, suggests that all pupils, including the most able, have made good progress from their starting points across key stage 1.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The school has rigorous safeguarding policies and procedures that are up to date, regularly reviewed and implemented effectively. As a result, all relevant checks on staff, visitors and volunteers are in place. All staff are aware of what to do if they have concerns because safeguarding training is part of the school's induction programme and annual refresher training is provided for existing staff to ensure that updates are well understood. Class teachers record and report all concerns, no matter how minor, because they see such information as part of the 'jigsaw' for each child, which enables them to identify early signs of potential problems. This approach, alongside the school's very effective partnership with the Wyre Forest and Hagley Project, ensures that pupils are safe and their families are well supported.

Pupils and parents say that bullying is rare and when it happens it is dealt with quickly and effectively. Pupils struggled to think of examples of bullying in the school in recent times, showing a mature understanding of the difference between disagreements when another child may be 'mean' to them and incidents of bullying.

All pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations. They spoke of learning about 'stranger danger', water safety and road safety, as well as opportunities to take part in 'bikeability' courses, earning certificates for safe cycling. Younger pupils spoke with confidence about speaking with school staff if they were scared or worried about anything. Older pupils are well versed in internet safety and the risks involved in using social media.

### **Inspection findings**

- You, your leaders and governors work very effectively together to drive improvement within a culture of high aspiration and collegiate responsibility. Teachers feel that they are an integral part of this because they are involved in identifying next steps for the school and its pupils. Consequently, they take great pride in their contributions to achieving the agreed aims and in seeing the impact of their work through the accomplishments of their pupils.
- Governors provide support and challenge in appropriate measure. They have ensured that they have a good balance of skills and experience, through careful recruitment and training, and that committees match the priorities of the school. They are actively involved in numerous school activities and their roles as link governors ensure that they have first-hand knowledge of standards in the school as well as information from you and your leaders. Governors know how additional funding is spent and how pupils' achievement is improving as a result. They are fully involved in improvement planning and in checking that plans come to fruition.
- Self-evaluation is rigorous and accurate. Consequently, you and your governors have a very clear view of the strengths of the school and what

needs to be done to secure further improvement. For instance, you have rightly identified writing as an area for further development, alongside the need to regularly review provision and delivery of the new curriculum to ensure that it is meeting the needs and abilities of pupils.

- This year, you have introduced a number of changes to the way in which writing is taught, following identification of slower progress in this subject across the school. Much useful work has been done to identify which approaches and strategies work best for pupils in the school. As a result, pupils' books show that they are making better progress in writing, particularly in key stage 1, and you are now focusing on ensuring that similar improvements are secured at key stage 2.
- In 2015 attendance dropped below the national average, mainly as a result of medical needs among a small group of pupils. This has now been rectified and current school information shows that attendance overall is now at the national average.
- Children settle into the Reception class well, particularly those who have attended the Nursery. Routines and expectations are rapidly established so that children learn to work and play together quickly, well supported by adults. Classrooms and outdoor spaces are organised carefully to encourage children to access activities independently. During the inspection, children spoke confidently of what they were doing. They are typically interested in visitors and very happy to share their learning, inviting participation in their activities. In 2015, the proportion reaching a good level of development rose significantly to well above the national figure as a result of a high proportion of children entering with skills and understanding above what is normally the case. This year, outcomes are below the national figure although in line with previous attainment in the school prior to 2015. This is because a high proportion begin school without previous experience of nursery school and/or with language delay. Although the vast majority of children are making good progress from their starting points, you have recognised that, over time, the typically much smaller number of girls in Reception classes do not do as well as boys, particularly in number. Steps taken to address this are now beginning to reverse this trend.
- In 2015 the proportion of pupils who reached the required standard in the phonics screening test in Year 1 was above the national average overall. However, boys did not do as well as girls in the school or as well as other boys nationally. You took immediate steps to rectify this. As a result, the overall proportion of pupils achieving the standard this year has risen again and boys have achieved at least as well as girls.
- Since the last inspection, standards reached by the end of key stage 2 have remained above the national average. Although this year's national test outcomes for Year 6 are not comparable with those of previous years, information suggests that attainment is in line with initial government figures. As expected by the school, achievement was not as high in writing as in reading. Although attainment in mathematics was lower than expected, you have already identified the reasons for this. Consequently, you have taken rapid and appropriate steps to revise approaches to teaching mathematics. Importantly, you have not focused only on Year 6, but implemented these from Reception Year onwards.

- Behaviour in lessons and around the school is uniformly good. Pupils are keen to learn because teachers make sure that lessons take their interests into account and build on what they already know and understand. Pupils say that their lessons are 'fun' and they get opportunities to apply and practise what they learn. They are particularly enthusiastic about 'forest school' and bell-boating activities and are very keen to explain how these help them learn new and exciting skills. Pupils say that teachers explain how they can improve their work very clearly and most could explain their next steps confidently. However, I noted, and pupils agreed, that they are not consistently given harder work when they have mastered a particular skill or concept. As a result, rates of progress are not as rapid as they could be for some pupils.
- The vast majority of parents are fulsome in their praise of the school. Several spoken to during the inspection said that nothing is too much trouble for leaders or teachers and that they always make time to listen. Parents spoke of the caring and nurturing ethos of the school and the work done by leaders to ensure that it is at the centre of the local community.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- actions taken to improve the proportion of children in the early years reaching a good level of development, particularly in number for girls, are reviewed regularly and that gaps are reducing
- the success of the revised approaches to writing in key stage 1 is replicated in key stage 2
- further challenge is routinely provided when pupils show that they are ready.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the 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

Mel Ford  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with you, the deputy headteacher, a group of five governors, including the chair of governors, a group of teachers, groups of pupils, parents and a senior adviser from the Wyre Forest and Hagley Project. I visited classrooms and observed the work of teachers and pupils. I considered responses from parents and teachers to electronic surveys. I also looked at a range of documents including the school's self-evaluation and plans for development, pupil

assessment information, school policies, including those for safeguarding, child protection and special educational needs and documents about the use and impact of government funding. I evaluated the school's use of pupil premium funding (additional funding provided by the government for those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those children who are looked after) and the sport premium funding.