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Sara Wilkes
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Dear Miss Wilkes

Short inspection of Sharmans Cross Junior School

Following my visit to the school on 6 October 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. Since your appointment in January 2015, you have continued to strengthen all aspects of the school's work. The pupils describe the school as 'one big family where everyone is welcome'. You and the staff are open to learning from other schools so that you can better meet the learning and developmental needs of pupils. Together, you make sure that different groups of pupils make good progress during their time at the school.

Pupils are thoughtful and kind towards each other and during their interactions with adults. They show resilience in lessons and a willingness to learn from their errors so that they can complete their work successfully. All the parents I spoke with and the vast majority who responded to the Ofsted online questionnaire were positive about the school's work. 'An approachable team of staff' and 'They consider the individual child's needs', were just some of the views expressed by parents.

At the time of the previous inspection, leaders and governors were asked to raise the overall quality of teaching to outstanding. Ten new teachers have joined the school in the last few years. Senior leaders have managed the changes in staffing well. The training and support for new staff to the school has been appropriate and helped to keep the impact on pupils' learning to an absolute minimum. You rightly recognise that further work is required to help teachers in Years 3 and 4 help even more pupils to make accelerated progress in mathematics.

Following the last inspection, senior leaders were also asked to improve the way in which pupils' achievement in different subjects is tracked. The actions taken in response to this have been successful. Teachers with responsibilities for different subjects keep a close check on pupils' achievement across the curriculum. They use this information well to identify any gaps in pupils' learning and to help staff plan activities to address these gaps. This approach is helping pupils to make strong progress across a range of subjects.

Senior leaders are taking appropriate action to help disadvantaged pupils across the school to achieve well over time. Nevertheless, your own information confirms that some disadvantaged pupils in the school do not attain as well as other pupils nationally.

Safeguarding is effective.

'Staff have moved mountains for me', declared one parent when outlining the support that you and the staff provided during a particularly difficult time. Keeping pupils safe is high on the agenda for staff and governors. Staff training is kept under constant review to ensure that they know what to do if they are concerned about a pupil. Together with the chair of the governing body, you regularly check that the school's arrangements for keeping pupils safe are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality.

All the parents I talked with commended the school's approach to keeping their children safe. The pupils I spoke with told me that they feel safe in school and that they know how to look after themselves in different situations. Older pupils, for instance, explained that they would not take any medication without the consent of an adult. Pupils of all ages behave well around school and in lessons. They said you were 'firm but fair' when dealing with any incidents of misbehaviour. Pupils dress smartly and are rightly proud of their school.

Inspection findings

- You have high expectations of pupils. These expectations are shared by staff and governors. You, the deputy headteacher and the assistant headteacher keep a close check on pupils' learning and the quality of teaching. As a consequence, you are all fully aware of what the school does well and where further improvements are required. Your attention to detail ensures that no stone is left unturned and that pupils are helped to achieve well by the end of Year 6.
- The members of the governing body have responded well to local authority training. Governors provide an appropriate level of challenge to senior leaders and ask pertinent questions about the performance of different groups of pupils. For example, the governor responsible for overseeing the achievement of disadvantaged pupils is fully aware of the actions being taken to help pupils overcome any barriers to learning and the impact of the support that these pupils receive.
- The 2016 Year 6 provisional results indicate that standards were above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. Your own information

about pupils' achievement and work in pupils' books confirms that the pupils in Year 6 made at least good progress from their different starting points when they joined the school.

- The actions that senior leaders are taking to eradicate differences in achievement between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally are having a beneficial impact across the school. Together with staff, you ensure that the support these pupils receive is relevant. In lessons, and in accordance with school policy, staff use a 'hot marking' approach. They pay particular attention to any pupils identified as at risk of not meeting their learning targets and provide them with prompt and detailed guidance as early in the lesson as possible. Your latest information about pupils' achievement shows that while disadvantaged pupils are making good progress and reaching higher standards than in the past, further work is required to help more disadvantaged pupils reach even higher standards by the end of Year 6.
- Teachers have benefited from the support and training they have received from the local authority and independent consultants. In all year groups, reading and writing activities are carefully planned to meet the needs of pupils of different abilities. Pupils enjoy reading and do so with confidence and expression. Pupils' written work is of a high quality. Their writing successfully captures the imagination of the reader because they use interesting vocabulary to excellent effect. Some of the pupils who join the school in Year 3 do not form their letters correctly or write neatly. Staff provide them with extra help and make sure that all pupils learn to write legibly and join their letters correctly.
- Raising pupils' achievement in mathematics has been a focus for the school. Teachers in Years 5 and 6 are particularly skilful at ensuring that pupils make rapid progress. This is because they plan activities which enable pupils to become proficient at using their knowledge of numbers to solve complex mathematical problems. In one example, a group of the most able Year 6 pupils used their knowledge of percentages, fractions, division and multiplication to answer sophisticated questions about exchange rates in Australia and New Zealand. One pupil commented, and others agreed, 'these skills will help us in life'.
- In Years 3 and 4, opportunities for pupils to develop their problem-solving and reasoning skills are occasionally missed. This prevents some pupils from making even faster progress in mathematics. Further support and training for staff in these year groups is planned.
- Pupils enjoy attending the before-school breakfast club. The club is well organised and calm. Pupils are encouraged to socialise and play team games. Staff actively encourage pupils to use their initiative and to help others in any way that they can. Most recently a group of Year 5 pupils raised funds for Cancer Research during their lunch breaks. Another pupil in Year 4 won a national photographic competition and in return the school was gifted with a range of photographic and wildlife equipment.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the difference between disadvantaged pupils and pupils nationally continues to diminish so that they reach even higher standards by the end of Year 6
- staff have the chance to share the existing highly effective practice in the school to assist teachers in Years 3 and 4 to help pupils to make even faster progress in mathematics.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Solihull. 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 and the assistant headteacher. I also met with a representative from the governing body. I had a telephone conversation with a local authority representative. Senior leaders joined me on brief visits to lessons. We talked to pupils about their learning. Together, we looked at examples of pupils' current work and work from the last academic year. I spoke with parents at the start of the school day. I spoke informally with pupils throughout the day and I listened to some pupils from Years 3 and 6 read. I reviewed a range of documentation including the school's own evaluation of its performance, the most recent information about pupils' achievement, and documents related to keeping pupils safe. This inspection focused particularly on the achievement of different groups of pupils in Years 3 to 6; the impact of the actions that school leaders are taking to help disadvantaged pupils reach even higher standards; and pupils' achievement in mathematics.