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Mrs Joanne Jelves
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Dear Mrs Jelves

Short inspection of Ridgeway Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 16 November 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 November 2011.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You, and leaders at all levels, have a very clear understanding of the strengths and areas for development in the school. You have used this well to take informed action to further improve the school.

Effective action has been taken to address the areas for improvement identified during the last inspection. All staff follow the school's marking policy so that pupils' work is marked consistently in a range of subjects. Pupils are given clear guidance on how to improve their work and staff routinely check that pupils respond to their comments in an appropriate manner. This, along with a clear focus on developing literacy skills across the curriculum, means that progress is improving, particularly in writing.

Attainment in writing was above the national average at key stage 2 in 2016, and Year 6 pupils have consistently attained higher than is found nationally in grammar, punctuation and spelling tests. Attainment in reading at key stage 2 was broadly in line with the national average in 2016 and pupils have attained above the average in reading and writing in key stage 1 assessments since the last inspection. Outcomes in the phonics screening checks have also been consistently above national averages over time.

The progress pupils made in mathematics during key stage 2 did not match that made in other subjects in 2016. School leaders are taking effective action to address this so

that progress overall, and for girls and middle-ability pupils in particular, is improving. Action has been taken to deepen pupils' understanding of mathematical concepts, but this needs time to embed to develop higher level skills such as reasoning and problem solving.

The most able pupils in last year's Year 6 did not achieve as well in mathematics as they did in other subjects. This meant that a smaller proportion than found nationally attained highly in reading, writing and mathematics combined. In addition, a smaller proportion of the most able pupils in last year's Year 2 achieved a greater depth in reading than the national average. Leaders have measures in place to help teachers challenge the most able pupils to make rapid progress and this led to pupils with high prior attainment making accelerated progress in writing, and in grammar, punctuation and spelling in key stage 2 last year. However, the increased level of challenge is not yet resulting in consistently strong outcomes in a range of subjects.

Children settle into the early years setting well and make good progress from their starting points in most areas. However, leaders are aware that effective action needs to be taken to ensure that a greater proportion of children reach a good level of development by the end of Reception Year.

Pupil premium funding has been used effectively to improve the progress of disadvantaged pupils and, over time, they have made similar or faster progress than other pupils across the school in many subjects. However, significant differences remain between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and that of other pupils nationally. School leaders have identified addressing this as a priority for improving the school.

Pupils are proud of their work and proud of their school. They enjoy learning and they behave well. Pupils are polite and happy, and the positive ethos of the school is well supported by parents. The vast majority of parents who made their views known during the inspection were full of praise for staff and almost all would recommend the school to other parents.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding policy and practice are detailed and robust, and thorough records are stored securely. Staff are clear about their safeguarding responsibilities and they have received up-to-date training. Staff at all levels have a thorough understanding of what they should do if they have concerns about a child. Referrals are timely and outside agencies are used appropriately. Consequently, vulnerable children are well protected.

Pupils feel safe and all staff and the vast majority of parents who made their views known believe that pupils are safe in school. A range of issues related to safety are covered in an age-appropriate way in the curriculum and pupils are taught how to stay safe when using the internet. Keeping children safe is a core part of the school's culture.

Inspection findings

- Leaders have high expectations of staff and pupils and lead by example. The positive relationships between leaders, staff, pupils and parents support the good progress pupils make in the school.
- Leaders evaluate the strengths and areas for development of the school thoroughly and accurately. They use this information to inform their plans for improvement. Consequently, this school has improved since the last inspection.
- Staff work well together for the benefit of the pupils, and teachers value the training that they are given to help them to improve their practice. The management of teachers' performance is used effectively to set and monitor targets to enhance the quality of education provided by the school. Staff take opportunities to learn from the best practice in the school, and newly qualified teachers are particularly well supported.
- There is some very high-quality teaching in the school. Teaching assistants are well deployed and thoughtful questions are used by staff to deepen pupils' understanding. Pupils respond positively to high expectations and established routines, and, as staff are clear about what pupils know and can do, they set appropriate tasks to help them make good progress. Activities are also adjusted if pupils need further help or additional challenge.
- Staff often show pupils what they want them to do in a range of lessons and then pupils complete the tasks themselves. They are also given time to reflect on what they have learned and how they can improve on what they have done. Pupils work equally productively as a whole class, in groups, as pairs or individually.
- The school's marking policy is used well by all staff. Books are marked regularly and teachers set additional tasks for pupils to complete to consolidate or deepen their learning. This helps pupils to make good progress across a range of subjects.
- The development of literacy skills is actively promoted across the curriculum. The school is a communication-rich environment and high-quality displays are used effectively by pupils to aid their learning.
- Pupils enjoy reading. They read for pleasure and to access information. The most able pupils read suitable texts fluently, and those who find reading more challenging can use the sounds that letters represent to work out words.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and supported by a variety of enrichment activities. Pupils make good progress in a range of subjects, including art, music, computing and science. They also learn how to stay safe.
- Pupils are keen to learn and have positive attitudes towards their studies. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is embedded within the school's ethos and fundamental British values are promoted well. Pupils are tolerant and respectful and have a thorough understanding of different cultures. They are taught about the democratic process and they are willing to take on responsibility. Pupils play an active role in developing the school's culture through involvement in 'pupil voice' groups, such as 'healthy heroes', 'online safety squad' or 'charity troopers'.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They play with consideration for others during social time and they are polite and welcoming to visitors. Inappropriate behaviour happens infrequently and is declining. There have been no permanent exclusions and very few fixed-term exclusions since the last inspection.

- Pupils enjoy coming to school. They believe that bullying is extremely rare. They are punctual and the vast majority of pupils have excellent attendance. Overall attendance for all groups of pupils currently at the school is above last year's national average.
- Children in the early years make good progress from their starting points in most areas of learning. However, a smaller proportion of children reach a good level of development by the end of Reception than can be found nationally, so they are not fully prepared for Year 1. Leaders are aware that pupils need to demonstrate their skills and understanding across the whole of the curriculum and that leaders need to continue to focus on improving literacy in Reception.
- Pupils, particularly middle-ability pupils and girls, made slow progress in mathematics in key stage 2 in 2016. As a result, leaders have put into place actions to improve outcomes in mathematics. Staff have benefited from additional training and it is evident that staff have high expectations of all pupils. There is now a consistent focus on developing reasoning and problem-solving skills and pupils are very positive about the way that they are taught mathematics. This is beginning to have an impact and pupils currently in the school are making improved progress.
- As a result of slower progress in mathematics, a smaller proportion than the average of the most able pupils attained highly in reading, writing and mathematics in last year's Year 6. However, all of the most able pupils reached the expected standard in writing, and grammar, punctuation and spelling, with almost two thirds achieving a high score in the latter. To aid more rapid progress across the curriculum this year, staff are focusing on developing higher order thinking skills, making it clear to the most able pupils what is expected of them, deepening their understanding with probing questions and increasing the level of challenge more quickly in lessons. This is leading to improved progress, but it is yet to have an impact on published outcomes.
- Pupil premium funding has been used effectively to provide a breakfast club, support enrichment activities and ensure that the learning mentor and other staff can help disadvantaged pupils reach their potential. As a result, attendance and progress have improved, but their attainment does not yet match that of other pupils nationally. Consequently, improving the attainment of disadvantaged pupils by helping them to make accelerated progress is a high priority for school leaders.
- Equality of opportunity is promoted well. For example, provision for children looked after and for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is high quality. Parents and carers of children looked after and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities value the way the school supports their children.
- Parents are full of praise for the school. They receive regular and useful information about their children's progress and believe that staff are approachable and respond well to any concerns that they may raise.
- Governors have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They have the skills, knowledge and expertise to offer appropriate support and challenge. They receive independent reports about the school and ask informed questions about the information they receive from leaders.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they review, refine and embed systems that are in place in order to:

- increase the proportion of children who reach a good level of development at the end of Reception Year
- increase the rate of progress of disadvantaged pupils so that their levels of attainment are closer to those of other pupils nationally
- challenge the most able pupils to make rapid progress in a range of subjects throughout the school
- deepen pupils' understanding of mathematical concepts, including reasoning and problem solving, so that outcomes improve in this subject area.

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

Yours sincerely

Simon Mosley
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you, other leaders, four governors (including the chair of the governing body), and a small group of staff. I also had a telephone conversation with a local authority officer. My focus was on the progress made by different groups of pupils, particularly in mathematics. I also considered aspects of leadership and management, including how effectively the pupil premium funding is used.

I spoke informally with parents at the beginning of the day and considered 65 responses to Parent View and 40 free-text comments made by parents. I also talked to pupils throughout the inspection, made short visits to every classroom with senior leaders, and I listened to a small number of pupils read. A range of documentation, including the most recent information about pupils' progress, leaders' evaluation of the school's performance, documents related to behaviour, safety and attendance, and the minutes of meetings of the governing body, was also reviewed.