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Ms Ellen Taylor
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Taylor

Short inspection of Little Bloxwich CofE VC Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 10 January 2017, 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 January 2013.

This school continues to be good.

Leaders have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You and your deputy headteacher's strong leadership, together with effective governance, continue to develop a cohesive and effective team of teachers and support staff. The vast majority of parents who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, or who spoke with me at the start of the inspection paid tribute to leaders, governors and staff, and were right to do so. The school provides a positive and inclusive learning community for pupils and their families.

Pupils are enthusiastic and very well behaved. The staff value pupils' work and efforts and they motivate pupils to succeed and enjoy school. The curriculum and teaching make a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development. Disadvantaged pupils achieve as well as other pupils. However, there is potential to improve teaching further by making sure that in all lessons teachers offer the right level of challenge when questioning pupils or when planning more challenge using extension activities.

Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make rapid progress. Provision for these pupils is expertly managed and monitored. Teachers and teaching assistants are particularly effective in helping pupils with additional or specific learning needs to reach their individual learning targets. For example, pupils on the autistic spectrum achieve exceptionally well and are fully integrated with their classmates. Staff provide them with well-focused and highly effective support

that extends their learning.

Early years provision in the Reception class is good. You and I looked at a good range of children's work set out in books called 'learning journeys'. These show that there has been sustained improvement to standards in the early years. It is encouraging to see that the most recent outcomes show that the proportion of children reaching a good level of development was above national figures last year. This cohort is on track to reach the same standards. For many children this represents rapid progress in relation to their starting points as most join the school with skills and abilities that are below those typical for their age. However, assessments also show that some children who exceeded age-related standards in the early years do not always reach the higher standards in reading and mathematics by the end of Year 2.

Teachers and support staff are very good at teaching phonics in the early years and key stage 1. The most recent national assessment results show that the vast majority of pupils reached the expected standard in the phonics screening check in both Year 1 and Year 2. This lays strong foundations for pupils' early development in reading and writing. You recognise, rightly, that there is still potential to build on the good outcomes achieved in phonics to make sure that more pupils reach the higher standard in reading by the end of Year 2.

You have worked very hard with the staff team since the previous inspection to raise standards and improve teaching. Well-devised training, coaching and mentoring have been successful in maintaining good and effective teaching. This is reflected in pupils' outcomes. For example, last year's assessments show that the large majority of pupils in Year 6 reached or exceeded age-related standards in mathematics. Of particular note is the use made of pupil premium funding to provide expert mathematics teaching and leadership. The teacher responsible for coordinating mathematics uses assessments very well to target pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils, to make sure that they reach at least age-related standards. Combined with some highly effective mathematics teaching, this is having a positive impact on eliminating differences in the mathematics achievement between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally.

All the pupils I spoke to told me that they love coming to school. Attendance is in line with the national average and you and the staff keep regular checks on each class's attendance. Attendance figures for Little Bloxwich showed that there were too many instances of persistent absenteeism last year. The positive relationships established with families are reducing instances of persistent absence so there is scope to continue these efforts so that all families make sure their children attend school regularly.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding procedures are effective and fit for purpose. Staff vetting and checking systems are rigorous and up to date. Teaching, support and administrative staff are well trained and vigilant. The vast majority of parents that I spoke to and

those responding by text message agreed that pupils are safe in school and are well cared for by the staff. The parent support adviser keeps very robust records to follow up absenteeism and to make sure that pupils are safe when not in school. The school has established strong relationships with families. There are well-defined and clear referral procedures so that all staff, including supervisory and ancillary staff, are aware of whom to go to if they are concerned about a child's welfare or safety.

Inspection findings

- Teaching and assessment have improved well since the previous inspection. You and your staff accurately monitor pupils' progress and performance. Standards are above average in mathematics by the end of key stage 2 and are in line with the national average in reading and writing. This represents good progress in relation to pupils' starting points.
- Good teaching and accurate assessments enable leaders and staff to track pupils' progress and performance. There is now scope to improve teaching further in some lessons by providing more challenge for pupils who have the potential to learn in greater depth and to extend their knowledge and understanding.
- Teachers and support staff are successful in encouraging pupils to apply their core literacy and mathematics skills in all subjects of the national curriculum. This is a significant improvement since the school's previous inspection. The activities planned for pupils have a positive impact on their academic and personal development.
- Special topic days, where pupils from different ages and classes work together on themes such as last year's Olympic Games in Brazil, or when celebrating religious festivals and events such as Advent and harvest time, enable pupils to develop their independence, self-confidence and core reading, writing and mathematics skills. Pupils also participate in stimulating and enjoyable activities that combine subjects to extend their skills and experiences. For example, pupils told me about a fashion show they took part in as part of their art and design work.
- Pupils behave very well and are keen to do their best. The wonderful range of writing, artwork and displays of pupils' work around the school demonstrates how well your staff value pupils' efforts and achievements.
- The focus on improving pupils' writing has been successful. Pupils develop a consistent writing style with accurate form and structure. The quality and range of writing completed by pupils as well as spelling assessments show that pupils achieve well in writing. The same is true in mathematics, particularly in key stage 2. Leaders are now, rightly, focusing on improving still further the achievement of the most able pupils in reading and mathematics in key stage 1. Assessments show improvement already so that more pupils are on track to reach higher standards in key stage 1, reflecting good teaching and accurate assessments.
- Pupils enjoy school, which is reflected in improving attendance rates that are

in line with the national average. Persistent absence rates are reducing because of effective and close working relationships with families, particularly those involving vulnerable or disadvantaged pupils. Leaders are, rightly, addressing persistent absence as a priority and recognise that there needs to be a continued focus on reducing this still further.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to focus on improving teaching even further so that, in all lessons, the tasks planned and questions posed for pupils offer the right level of challenge to extend their learning and deepen understanding
- teachers use the school's tracking and assessment system to make sure that all of the most able children in the early years go on to attain at greater depth in reading and mathematics at the end of key stage 1
- they build on the strong relationships that exist with parents and families to reduce still further persistent absenteeism.

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

Yours sincerely

Charalambos Loizou
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, the deputy headteacher and other members of staff with management responsibilities. I also met two governors, including the chair of the governing body. We visited classes together to observe some teaching, looked at pupils' work in books and spoke to pupils during lessons. I also spoke to pupils during morning breaktime and at lunchtime. I spoke to some parents at the start of the school day and considered the 27 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. I also considered the 26 responses from parents who commented by text to Ofsted's regional office. I met with the parent support adviser who works with families and also has responsibility for monitoring and following up pupils' attendance and absenteeism. I scrutinised the school's development plans and priorities, as well as some monitoring files to see how you and your leadership team check the quality and effectiveness of teaching across the school. You shared with me the most recent assessments of pupils' attainment and progress and we discussed the national test results and assessments undertaken by pupils in 2016. I checked staff vetting and safeguarding procedures to determine whether the school's arrangements for safeguarding are effective.