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Mrs Ann Mason
Headteacher
Amblecote Primary School
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Dear Mrs Mason

Short inspection of Amblecote Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 17 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 September 2011.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Governors, staff and parents share your vision of: 'We achieve because we believe in our children.' The comment 'My five children have all loved going to this school. It is a good school and the teachers make sure the children do very well,' was typical of the views of parents.

You and your deputy headteacher are passionate about the staff and pupils at this school. You both exhibit energy and integrity and have secured systematic improvements since the last inspection.

Pupils see value in what they are learning. They behave well in lessons, at break and lunchtime, and as they move around the school. They are courteous and polite to each other and to adults. In lessons, pupils are inquisitive, articulate and confident. They are used to discussing their work with their peers; they listen respectfully to each other and express their views maturely. Pupils indicated they know what is expected of them and they are proud to be part of the Amblecote team.

Since the previous inspection, safeguarding procedures have been strengthened and the effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion has improved. Assessment practices have become more embedded to support pupils' learning because teachers evaluate the learning taking place on a regular basis. Leaders have developed their self-evaluation practice and this has enabled them to

better judge the impact of the provision on all pupil outcomes. Attendance rates are improving because leaders communicate the importance of regular attendance with parents and carers. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils, continue to make good progress across the school.

Leaders acknowledge that they need to check more frequently on pupils' progress to identify where additional support is required. In addition, they are aware that not all staff challenge the most able pupils with sufficient rigour to ensure their rapid progress. Leaders are analysing attendance information in more detail than previously to identify trends of absence and take the necessary steps. Their particular concern is for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding policies and other arrangements are robust. You keep high-quality records about child protection. Staff are trained to a high level in keeping children safe and are vigilant in spotting and responding to concerns. Policies around recruitment and checking the suitability of staff are rigorously implemented. Leaders ensure that the school website is kept updated with the relevant safeguarding documents. All pupils with whom I talked confirmed that they feel safe in school. They told me that bullying is rare and that they trust adults to deal with any that does happen. Pupils understand the dangers that can occur when using the internet, and they know how to avoid them. Leaders have developed an innovative, proactive school council and cyber council that work hard to present a voice for all pupils.

Inspection findings

- Governors and leaders have successfully established a shared ethos and vision throughout the school. Parents believe that the school is well led and managed. Leaders and governors are extremely passionate about providing a good-quality education for all pupils and they know their school well. They have an accurate view of its strengths and weaknesses, and have become better over time at challenging leaders. They have been heavily involved in developing successful projects in the local community. They are keen to continually improve the quality of their work and to demonstrate the impact of the training they have received.
- Provision in the early years is very effective. Many children join the school with starting points below those that are typical for their age. Most children make good progress throughout the Reception Year. Children are independent, confident and articulate at communicating their opinions or requesting help from an adult when they need it.
- Pupils' progress in key stage 1 is strong in reading, writing and mathematics. The teaching of phonics is of good quality and the effective application of pupils' skills in phonics contributes well to the development of pupils' early reading and writing. Senior leaders have introduced a new approach to the planning and teaching of mathematics in key stage 1. This has raised teachers' expectations

and increased the range of available resources to support pupils in applying their number knowledge when reasoning mathematically.

- Pupils' attainment in key stage 2 has slowed in the last two years. Nevertheless, most pupils achieved similar attainment to pupils nationally. In 2016, the proportion of pupils who reached the expected standard for reading, writing and mathematics combined was above the national average. However, a lower proportion than average of the most able pupils attained higher standards by the end of key stage 2. Pupils attained higher standards than pupils nationally at the expected standard in mathematics. Leaders recognise that pupils achieved below the national average for the expected standard in reading, writing and spelling, punctuation and grammar.
- Leaders and teachers responded quickly and energetically to the 2016 key stage 2 results. Leaders created a clear action plan, closely linked with the school development plan, to help bring about the necessary improvements. Pupils are taught in smaller groups according to their ability and, as a result, teaching is now more tailored to the needs of all groups. Current outcomes for all groups of pupils demonstrate positive progress. Leaders have agreed to frequently check on pupils' progress to quickly identify where specific support for pupils is needed and how best it can be provided.
- The teaching of reading is effective across the school. Pupils enjoy reading and say that their teachers read a lot to them. Pupils read fluently and with great expression, showing obvious enjoyment. Leaders have invested in high-quality texts. This has encouraged pupils to read more widely. Staff teach phonics effectively and pupils use their skills to accurately read and write new words.
- Most teachers in all years have good subject knowledge that they use well to question pupils so that they deepen their understanding of their work. However, not all teachers sufficiently challenge the most able pupils in order to make the accelerated progress they are capable of. Relationships between teachers and pupils are strong and behaviour across the school is good.
- Attendance has improved since the previous inspection, but only at the same rate as attendance nationally. Leaders rigorously track the attendance of individual children. This is having some impact but some parents still do not ensure that their children attend school often enough. Leaders acknowledge that they could analyse attendance information more effectively to speedily identify trends of absence, particularly for the disadvantaged and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that they:

- frequently check on pupils' progress to more quickly identify where additional support is required
- continue to improve the quality and consistency of challenge given to the most able pupils to ensure their accelerated progress

- continue to analyse attendance information to speedily identify trends of absence and take the necessary action.

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

Yours sincerely

Susan Hickerton
Lead Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection I met with you and your deputy headteacher. Together, we visited most classes during the day, where we observed teaching and learning, looked at books and spoke with pupils about their work. I talked with parents at the start of the day and with many pupils in lessons and around school. I listened to some pupils read and talked to them about reading and the books they enjoy. I met with the governing body and a representative of the local authority. I scrutinised several documents, including your self-evaluation, school development plan, intervention plans, safeguarding and recruitment records and pupil data.

At our initial meeting we agreed the six focus areas for the inspection. These were attendance and persistent absence for vulnerable groups, outcomes in key stage 2, the teaching of mathematics in key stage 1, the teaching of reading and phonics in school, and the effectiveness of governance and safeguarding.