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Mrs Marie Thomas
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Dear Mrs Thomas

Short inspection of Clifford Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 22 February 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 October 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

In January 2015, Clifford Primary entered into a soft federation with Wellington Primary School and you became the executive headteacher of the two schools. This arrangement has proved successful in sharing expertise and resources across the two schools, enabling staff development and extending learning opportunities for the pupils.

You demonstrate strong leadership and are resolute in providing pupils with every opportunity to develop into hard-working, compassionate individuals who make a positive contribution to society. You have created a dedicated team of staff, including teachers who go the extra mile to make learning exciting. Leaders' decision-making and subsequent actions are focused on improving outcomes for all pupils. You have sustained the high expectations of pupils' work and behaviour seen at the last inspection. As a consequence, the vast majority of pupils are making good progress. Some pupils make exceptional progress due to highly effective teaching. Your challenge is to replicate this first-rate practice across all classes and subjects.

Nearly all pupils show excellent attitudes to their work and behave impeccably well. They are enthusiastic about learning because the experiences offered to them are worthwhile and have a real purpose. For example, in history pupils designed,

created and tested shadufs, enabling them to gain a better understanding of farming in Ancient Egyptian times. Pupils are eager to talk about their learning because it is memorable. In the early years, children were keen to tell me about exploring and using natural materials to create musical instruments in their 'forest school' session.

You have been successful in tackling the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Teachers maximise time for learning in lessons and respond well to pupils' needs, adapting plans accordingly to tackle any misconceptions as they arise. Pupils have productive discussions about their work and learn from one another. Teachers bring learning to life through engaging activities. For example, pupils used drama and dialogue well to make sense of a thought-provoking play script written by the teacher.

You have created a real sense of community within the school where pupils take care of each other. Pupils told me about the successful introduction of peer mediators on the playground. These specially trained pupils help others resolve disagreements in a non-confrontational manner. This is just one example of several where pupils at Clifford are trusted and given special responsibilities. Pupils play a genuine part in shaping the school's future because they are consulted about their school and what is working best for them. Leaders listen to, reflect and then act on pupils' feedback.

Parents are highly supportive of the school's work and praise the efforts of teachers and staff. They say that their children are happy and enjoy coming to school.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors do their best to ensure that pupils are kept safe and free from harm. Staff receive regular training about safeguarding so they are able to identify any concerns and raise these with the appropriate persons. Leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. Teachers plan relevant units of work that help pupils to understand and reduce everyday risks. For example, pupils told me about a visit from the Dog Trust and the important safety tips they learned about stroking unfamiliar dogs. Pupils have a good awareness of how to keep safe when using technology because of the effective guidance they receive from teachers.

Statutory checks are made on all staff to satisfy governors that they only appoint people suitable to work with children. However, there were some minor administrative errors on the school's single central record which were addressed before the end of the inspection. Those responsible for safeguarding should review the filing of paperwork to make it better organised. All parents who completed the online questionnaire, Parent View, said that their children felt safe at the school.

Inspection findings

- At the beginning of the inspection, we agreed four key lines of enquiry. In addition to evaluating the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements, I looked at the effectiveness of the teaching of phonics, the extent to which teachers and other adults challenge all pupils in their learning and how well assessment information is used to improve pupils' progress, particularly in mathematics.
- Despite the downward trend in the proportion of Year 1 pupils attaining the expected standard in the phonics test, current pupils are making good progress in securing phonic skills. Teachers plan effective, structured phonics lessons which enable pupils to build up their skills progressively. As a result, they are able to say sounds accurately and use their knowledge to read and spell age-appropriate words. Pupils also show good use of the language of phonics. For example, they correctly identify the word 'digraph' when describing a combination of two letters representing one sound.
- Pupils show positive attitudes to reading. Teachers use their strong subject knowledge to develop pupils' reading skills and promote reading for enjoyment. Boys and girls show an equal satisfaction in reading and are able to talk about their favourite authors. Occasionally, younger pupils are not being challenged fully in their reading; they are given books which are too easy for them.
- Teaching assistants usually provide a good level of support to pupils and help them make faster progress in their learning. At times, teaching assistants do not have the same high expectations as teachers, and do too much for pupils rather than expecting greater independence and letting them have a go first.
- Leaders and governors were disappointed in last year's dip in key stage 2 mathematics results against national standards. However, leaders have taken a thorough approach to finding out why this happened and have already put in place actions to rectify the issue. Pupils' current work shows that most are making good progress in mathematics. However, teachers do not yet adopt a consistent approach to the teaching of mathematical calculations and this hinders the progress of some pupils.
- Subject leaders use a broad range of information to accurately identify barriers to achievement in their subject areas. They are clear about what needs to be tackled to enable pupils to make more rapid progress. Subject leaders implement appropriate actions to improve teaching and as a result, pupils make better progress. For example, pupils extended their mathematical vocabulary after leaders made this a priority focus. Governors are proactive in making periodic checks on the effectiveness of leaders' work.
- Teachers adopt a range of approaches to help pupils deepen their understanding in English and mathematics. For example, pupils developed their knowledge of grammar through its application in history when writing diary entries from Queen Victoria's viewpoint. In addition, leaders' emphasis on extending reasoning skills has been very successful in enabling pupils to explain their thinking and work at greater depth. This has been supported by teachers' highly effective questioning.
- The majority of pupils, including the most able, are effectively challenged in their

learning and make good progress as a result. Teachers plan work that is well matched to the abilities of pupils. For example, in a mathematics lesson the most able pupils worked together to solve a complex problem related to filling three-dimensional shapes with water. Pupils skilfully applied their knowledge of volume, time and interpretation of graphs to arrive at a solution. While challenge is evident in core subjects, teachers do not yet routinely offer the same level of challenge across the whole curriculum.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers agree and apply a consistent whole-school approach to the teaching of mathematical calculations to support pupils' progression
- teaching assistants receive appropriate support and guidance so they have the same high expectations of pupils as teachers
- there are further opportunities for teachers to share the very best practice in school so all pupils are consistently challenged and make at least good progress
- teachers provide more challenge in foundation subjects for all pupils in order to deepen their knowledge and understanding.

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

Yours sincerely

Tim Hill

Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held discussions with you about the school's self-evaluation and current priorities. I met with a small group of staff to ask them about safeguarding. I also held a meeting with governors and spoke on the telephone to the school's independent school improvement adviser. I joined you in short visits to lessons where we observed learning, spoke to pupils about their work and looked at their books. I also spent time with the leader for mathematics and completed a book scrutiny.

I listened to younger pupils read and also held a discussion with a group of key stage 2 pupils. I evaluated a range of documents, including the school's development plan and records about keeping pupils safe. The views of parents were considered through the 35 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. I also spoke to parents at the end of the school day.