

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
[www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)



8 March 2017

Mrs Sharon Waldron  
Headteacher  
Stonham Aspal C of E VA Primary School  
The Street  
Stonham Aspal  
Stowmarket  
Suffolk  
IP14 6AF

Dear Mrs Waldron

### **Short inspection of Stonham Aspal C of E VA Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 8 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 June 2013.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

Since the last inspection, there have been significant changes in the school's leadership. You were appointed as headteacher in April 2015, a number of new governors have been elected and a new chair of governors is in post. You have created a new leadership team to assist you in the drive to secure high-quality teaching and learning and to create a school that is at least securely good. Building carefully on the practice already in place, you have made significant improvements. These include ensuring that the requirements of the new national curriculum are fully understood by staff and implementing a rigorous approach to assessing and tracking pupils' progress. Your plans show that you know that there is still work to be done to fully achieve your aims.

You have developed an ethos of high expectations of staff and pupils. Your calm and focused approach is appreciated by pupils, parents, staff and governors. They have confidence in the changes you have made and say that pupils' learning and progress have improved. Parents I spoke to informally at the start of the day were effusive in their praise for the school. Typical comments included, 'All the staff, particularly Mrs Waldron, are very approachable and act fast on any concerns,' and, 'I think Stonham Aspal Primary is a great school. It has a wonderful atmosphere and my children love attending it.' These views were endorsed by the significant number of parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, by texting their strongly positive perceptions of the school.

Pupils behave well in lessons and around school, and they show respect and courtesy to staff and visitors. They are interested in their learning and, in most classes, work diligently to present their work carefully and meet teachers' expectations. The systems you have put in place to make sure that pupils understand what they are learning and respond to increasingly high challenges are resulting in improved progress.

Working closely with governors, you have implemented a comprehensive plan for continuing to improve the school, which you review regularly. Priorities are identified through accurate evaluation, but how you will measure whether you are successful is not indicated clearly enough. This means that it is difficult for leaders and governors to know how well you are achieving the planned improvements.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records of staff suitability to work with children are detailed and of good quality.

You and the governing body ensure that staff are kept up to date with safeguarding requirements. Staff know their duties and understand their role in keeping pupils safe. They are well equipped to identify when pupils may be at risk of harm.

The pupils I spoke to told me very clearly that they feel safe at school. They consider bullying and bad behaviour to be rare events and they are confident that any member of staff, not just their teachers, will listen to them if they have concerns. Helping pupils to keep themselves safe is woven through the learning programmes. For example, your recent 'Safer Internet Day' reminded pupils about how to stay safe online and pupils talked knowledgeably to me about what they had learned.

Parents' views are equally positive. An overwhelming majority of parents agree that pupils are safe and well cared for at the school.

### **Inspection findings**

- To ascertain that the school remained good, one of my key lines of enquiry was about pupils' achievement in mathematics. Outcomes in 2016 suggested that pupils, particularly middle-ability and disadvantaged pupils, were not making enough progress in key stage 2. You agreed, and told me that your leadership team had already identified this as a key priority for the school.

- On visiting classrooms, looking at pupils' work and at your assessment information, it became clear that there is some high-quality mathematics teaching taking place but there is also scope to offer more challenge to some pupils. In some classes, teachers are introducing more tasks that require pupils to use mathematical reasoning to solve problems. We agreed that all teachers need to share the same high expectations of what pupils can achieve. You are working hard to ensure that all pupils regularly undertake work that requires them to think hard and use their arithmetical skills to solve a range of real-life problems and so deepen their understanding.
- Your recently appointed Key Stage 2 mathematics subject leader is making a positive difference. He provides colleagues with effective support and advice about how to improve outcomes for pupils. He is a strong role model for the teaching of mathematics and is a knowledgeable and effective subject leader.
- My second line of enquiry was about the teaching of phonics in key stage 1. This was because there was a decline in the percentage of pupils achieving the required standard in the national phonics screening check between 2014 and 2016. You have already taken substantial action to address this, by re-training teachers and support staff, improving the structure of phonics lessons and assessing pupils' progress more regularly.
- Staff are now more confident when they teach their phonics groups because their subject knowledge has improved and pupils are encouraged to use the new skills they learn, such as building words using letter sounds, more frequently. We discussed your drive to ensure that all lessons are fun, engaging and interactive. Your monitoring shows that this is usually the case. Where it is not, you are challenging staff to improve their practice further.
- My third line of enquiry was about attendance. You are aware that some groups of pupils are absent too frequently. You analyse this information and follow up absence when you have concerns. Governors have supported you by explaining, in their annual report to parents, the impact of too much time out of school. You give robust support to families to promote good attendance when you have concerns, but in a few cases more rigorous challenge is necessary to improve attendance sufficiently. Since September, attendance, particularly of disadvantaged pupils, has improved. We agreed the need for you and the governors to explore more ways to sustain this.
- My fourth line of enquiry was about the overall provision and support for disadvantaged pupils across the school. While the number of disadvantaged pupils in the school is below average, they do not do as well as other groups of pupils. Also, the information report, published on your website, is not as detailed as it should be.

- Across the school, disadvantaged pupils achieve less well than other pupils. Last term, the governors asked you to review how well the pupil premium is used to improve the outcomes they achieve. Teachers know who these pupils are and they ensure plentiful opportunities for them to be supported to access a range of activities, including wraparound care. Work to focus specifically on accelerating disadvantaged pupils' academic achievement is under way but is less well developed. Arrangements to review the effectiveness of the use of additional funds, and the impact of actions to improve pupils' learning, are not sufficiently developed.
- My final line of enquiry was about the accuracy of the school's own self-evaluation. This was to determine whether leaders have the capacity to bring about the improvement needed because of the decline in the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in phonics and relatively weaker progress in mathematics.
- Evidence shows that leaders have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. You have implemented a series of measures to strengthen teaching, to make sure that the curriculum is taught at an appropriate pace and to raise expectations. Your monitoring of teaching is incisive and staff are coached well, which is quickly resulting in improved practice.
- The plans you have implemented for further improvement include a comprehensive range of strategies and actions which are carefully evaluated on a termly basis. The intended impact of identified actions is not explained clearly enough to enable you and governors to understand how well you are on track to make the identified improvements.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils in all classes have sufficient opportunities to apply their mathematical learning to investigate and solve problems using their reasoning skills
- school development plans clearly identify the intended impact of actions so that leaders and governors know whether improvement is happening at a good pace and take action promptly if it is not on track
- plans to improve the achievement of disadvantaged pupils include the identification of the barriers they face to achieving all they can, as well as specific strategies to overcome them.

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

Yours sincerely

Nick Rudman  
**Ofsted Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

I met with you to discuss progress since the previous inspection. I also met the two senior leaders who have responsibility for standards across each key stage, to discuss outcomes for children and pupils and the impact of decisions leaders have made. I met with a group of governors, including the chair of the governing body, and a group of pupils from across key stage 2. I spoke on the phone to a representative from the local authority. I scrutinised a variety of sources of information, including your records of monitoring and evaluation, minutes of meetings of the governing body, and the school's assessment information for all year groups. I also scrutinised the school's safeguarding and child protection procedures, the records of checks leaders make on the suitability of staff to work with children, and information relating to attendance. We undertook joint observations of learning across the school, looked at work in pupils' books and spoke with pupils about their learning during lessons.