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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mrs Jeannette Little
Headteacher
Feckenham CofE First School
School Lane
Feckenham
Redditch
Worcestershire
B96 6QD

Dear Mrs Little

Short inspection of Feckenham CofE First School

Following my visit to the school on 28 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 January 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Under your strong leadership, there is an ambitious vision, team spirit and a drive for continual improvement. A culture of professional learning is very evident. Staff are committed to researching new and effective ways to help pupils to learn well. They value the opportunities that they have to learn from each other and from effective practice in other schools, locally and nationally. This was summed up well by one member of staff, who said, 'I love working at a school that encourages a love of learning for staff as well as pupils.' Staff and governors model the values that are at the heart of the school – a passion for learning, in a school that cares.

Parents hold the school in high regard. They appreciate the strong 'family atmosphere' and the core values that underpin school life. Comments from parents included: 'We chose the school because children have time to grow here while working hard. That's very special.'

At the last inspection you were given recommendations to:

- develop the role of subject leaders
- extend the thorough systems for checking pupils' progress to all subjects.

You have forged ahead in both of these areas. Subject leaders are involved in regular monitoring activities, including pupil progress meetings and learning walks.

They use information effectively. They work alongside teachers to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Governors who are linked to subjects provide the leaders with valuable support and challenge. Governor visits are focused and purposeful. Nevertheless, leaders and governors have accurately identified that more pupils need to reach standards at greater depth, in writing and mathematics, in all classes.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. You, and all staff, follow up concerns diligently and ensure that pupils receive the support that they need. You meet regularly with the governor responsible for safeguarding. You ensure that any issues are resolved and that the well-being and safety of every child is paramount.

'There isn't anywhere that we don't feel safe in school. Everyone cares for each other' was a typical comment from pupils. They understand how the school's values guide them and help them to respond to others. Staff act as good role models for children. As a result, there is an atmosphere of trust and respect throughout the school. Parents agree. One parent commented, 'This school puts the children's safety first in every way.'

All staff employed by the school receive regular training and updates on aspects of safeguarding. For example, this year, staff and governors have completed training on their duty to protect pupils from the dangers of radicalisation and extremism. The school's safeguarding policy has been updated to make sure that it meets all current requirements.

Inspection findings

- You have an accurate and thorough understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. Effective systems are in place across the school to check pupils' progress, in reading, writing and mathematics, from their different starting points. You continue to work to extend these systems to all subjects.
- You, and other leaders, use assessment information effectively to remedy any weaknesses and ensure that pupils do not fall behind in their learning. You carefully check any additional support and ensure that resources and activities are effective.
- Following the disappointing results in writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 in 2016, you conducted an audit of provision and staff training. You identified specific priorities. You, and other leaders, have taken swift and effective action to improve aspects of the teaching of writing and mathematics.
- In writing, you have reorganised the teaching of spelling and handwriting. You have placed greater emphasis on teaching the basic skills of punctuation and grammar. Your checks on teaching show that this has led to improvements. However, work in pupils' books shows that the new approach to teaching these aspects of writing is not yet consistent across all classes.

- In mathematics, staff are planning more opportunities for pupils to develop confidence and fluency in using and applying their mathematical knowledge to solve a range of 'real' problems. Work in pupils' books, displays around the school and your records of checks on teaching show that this has had a positive impact on pupils' learning in mathematics.
- You know that you need to reinforce expectations and maintain a close oversight to ensure that these improvements continue. You recognise that improvement plans do not have clear timescales and measurable targets for improvement. As a result, leaders, including governors, cannot easily check the extent to which, or how quickly, the school is meeting key priorities and further improving pupils' outcomes.
- The proportion of children achieving a good level of development at the end of early years remains above the national average. Children enter Year 1 with particular strengths in communication and language and are well prepared for the demands of key stage 1. The time children spend working with the Year 1 teacher sets them up very well for the next steps in their learning. Teachers work effectively to ensure that children's learning and development is well understood.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the school's improvement plans have clear timescales and measurable targets, so that leaders, including governors, can readily check the extent to which the school is meeting its key priorities
- expectations of pupils' spelling, punctuation and handwriting are consistently high across all classes.

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

Yours sincerely

Marilyn Mottram
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and subject leaders for mathematics and science. I also met with the chair of the governing body and two other governors. I had a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority. You joined me on brief visits to classes. We looked at examples of pupils' work and we talked to pupils about their learning. I spoke informally with pupils at different points during the school day. I reviewed a range of documentation, including the

school's own self-evaluation of its performance, the school development plan and documents related to keeping pupils safe. We discussed the most recent information about pupils' achievement. I took account of 20 responses by parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, two letters from parents and 11 free text comments. I considered six responses from members of staff to the online inspection questionnaire. I spoke to parents at the beginning and end of the school day. I also looked at information on the school's website.