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Mr Simon Stubbs
Executive Headteacher
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Dear Mr Stubbs

Short inspection of Astley CofE Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 21 March 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 March 2012.

This school continues to be good.

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

The ethos and environment of the school ensures that there is a strong focus on pupils' learning aligned to the school's values. In the most recent tests and assessments at the end of Year 6, pupils made above expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics. This was because of consistently good teaching and highly effective monitoring and tracking of pupil progress. Children's outcomes are also improving in early years. Parents responding to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View) were overwhelmingly positive. All who responded said they would recommend the school to another parent.

As a result of good leadership:

- you and your leaders know your school's strengths well and why it is not yet outstanding
- the school has continued to run effectively, in your absence, as strong leadership capacity has allowed other staff to assume additional responsibilities
- governors make a significant contribution to the school by providing strong support and rigorous challenge
- the school is popular with parents and over subscribed
- the rate of attendance of pupils is high, and it is improving for pupils who have

special educational needs and/or disabilities

- pupils behave very well in school and have positive attitudes to their learning.

When your school was last inspected in 2012 the report commended your dynamic leadership, clear vision and high aspirations. You have continued to maintain the 'exceptionally warm and welcoming ethos' and pupils have made good progress.

The last inspection report recommended that more teaching should be outstanding by teachers making better use of visual aids and deploying teaching assistants more effectively. It also stated that parents should have greater confidence in the school's management of behaviour.

Teaching remains good throughout the school and staff are confident in using information technology, for example in bringing storytelling to life in key stage 1. The effective deployment of teaching assistants has improved, although there are still occasions when their time is not used productively enough in lessons.

The school has won the hearts and minds of parents in relation to their previous concerns about the management of behaviour. All parents who responded to Parent View said that the school makes sure its pupils are well behaved.

This is not yet an outstanding school. Pupils currently in the school, including in Year 6, are not doing as well in writing as they are in reading and mathematics. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities have not made as much progress as their peers in school. Although their attendance is improving over time, the rate is still below that of other pupils nationally. The school is not monitoring the attendance of pupils by group closely enough, especially for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school does not meet all of its statutory requirements to publish specific information on its website on the pupil premium and the physical education (PE) and sport premium.

Safeguarding is effective.

The culture and ethos of safeguarding ensures that pupils feel very safe in school. This view is strongly supported by those parents who responded to Parent View, who all said their child feels safe in school. Staff are well trained for their roles and keep up to date with information and guidance. Information is held securely and recorded in a timely fashion. The school liaises well with external agencies including the local authority, the police and the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. Governors hold leaders to account to ensure that the school is meeting all of its statutory duties. Safeguarding is a standing item on staff and governor meetings to ensure that all members of the school community remain vigilant.

Inspection findings

- You have maintained the ethos of the school, which is underpinned by the school's values, including respect, tolerance and justice.
- The school is very popular, as the significant increase in the number of pupils on roll over the last three years testifies. Parents responding to the survey, Parent View, were universally positive about how well the school is led and managed.
- The arrangements whereby you are the executive headteacher of two schools, while there is a head of school in place at Astley for the whole week, are working well. This was evidenced by your absence during the inspection.
- The head of school has an accurate view of the quality of teaching in school and how well pupils are doing. Monitoring of teaching is effective. Leaders know the strengths in teaching and where further improvements are still needed. Regular whole-school progress meetings between leaders and teachers hold teachers to account for the progress pupils are making.
- Other leaders are well informed about all aspects of the school, and are not dependent on your continuous presence for the school to function effectively. Other potential leaders have been identified to carry out coordinator roles, thus expanding the capacity of leadership further. Although these coordinators have no formal leadership time allocated or remuneration for their roles, they have contributed to training, moderation of pupils' assessments and scrutiny of pupils' work.
- The partnership with the other local primary school, where you are executive headteacher, is enabling leaders and coordinators to network effectively with others performing a similar role to them.
- You and your other leaders know the school well. They have clearly identified the school's strengths and where further improvement is needed. Your self-evaluation is very accurate.
- Governors are highly experienced and committed. They bring a range of expertise and knowledge to the governing body. They too know the school well and are prepared to ask leaders difficult questions.
- Pupils appreciate the wider curriculum they enjoy, including music, art and science, a wide range of religions studied and ethical topics such as 'fair trade'.
- In the most recent tests and assessments, pupils made above-average rates of progress in reading, writing and mathematics from the end of key stage 1 to the end of key stage 2. In 2016, outcomes in early years were above average and above the broadly average outcomes achieved in 2015.
- Leaders are very thorough in the way they analyse information on the progress of pupils. Forecasts made back in December 2015 for last year's Year 6 pupils proved to be entirely accurate. This year, the current Year 6 pupils are on track to achieve above expected outcomes in reading and broadly average outcomes in mathematics, which would represent good progress in these subjects. Pupils read fluently and with expression and, in mathematics, they are able to talk about and use a range of calculation strategies.

- High inward mobility is a challenge for the school, especially when pupils arrive late in key stage 2. Those who joined the school from the start of their education in Reception do especially well.
- Leaders have identified writing as a key priority for the school this year. Teachers plan well for a wide range of genres, including creative stories, newspaper reports and diary entries. Writing activities are planned for a purpose linked to trips, for example, so that pupils can draw on actual events to stimulate their work. Writing is further developed through links with their topic work, for example on Egypt and South Africa. Teachers use technical terms and challenging vocabulary to encourage pupils' writing in greater depth, especially for most-able pupils. They use information technology and visual aids effectively to stimulate pupils' imagination.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around school. They have positive attitudes to their learning. There were no exclusions last year and there have been none so far this academic year. Pupils reported that they feel very safe and secure in school. Those spoken to were very positive about the wider curriculum, including trips and opportunities to take responsibilities. They have had the chance to vote for team captains and representatives on the team council and to take part in debates, for example on uniform and healthy eating. Older pupils act as young leaders at playtime.
- Overall attendance of pupils is high and the rate of persistent absence is low. It is not possible to evaluate the attendance of disadvantaged pupils as there are very few of these pupils in school. The attendance of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is on an improving trend, although it is still below the national average. Current rates of attendance for these pupils this academic year show further improvement.
- Leaders do not sufficiently monitor attendance of pupil groups, including disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Consequently, governors are not aware of any variations in absence between pupil groups.
- Pupils currently in Year 6 are not yet on track to achieve at least expected outcomes in writing.
- The numbers of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities in each year group are very small, but the school acknowledges that, overall, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities pupils have not made as much progress as their peers in school. It is not possible to evaluate current outcomes for disadvantaged pupils because of the very small size of the cohort in the school.
- The school has not published an evaluation of the impact of the pupil premium and the PE and sport premium on its website.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities pupils are making as much progress as other pupils in the school
- pupils do as well in writing by the end of key stage 2 as they are doing in reading and mathematics
- attendance of pupils is monitored more closely by pupil group and regularly reported to governors
- the website meets all statutory requirements.

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

Yours sincerely

Mark Sims
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, the executive headteacher was absent ill. I met the head of school, other senior members of staff and four members of the local governing body, including the chair. I visited parts of four lessons, observed jointly with the head of school. I also observed pupils as they moved around the school. I met with a group of pupils. I scrutinised the school's self-evaluation, pupil performance information, and safeguarding and child protection records. There were 30 responses to Parent View. Due to technical difficulties on the day it was not possible to receive any responses to Parent View freetext or pupil and staff surveys.

During the inspection, I focused on: outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities; outcomes in writing at the end of key stage 2; how well attendance is managed, including for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities; how effective the arrangements for the safeguarding of pupils are; and how well the school reports on the impact of additional funding, such as pupil premium and PE and sport premium.