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Miss Amanda Rogers
Headteacher
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Dear Miss Rogers

Short inspection of South Stoke Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 28 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 June 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You know your school and its pupils well. You have established a strong team spirit among staff and a shared determination to do the very best for pupils at your school. Governors have an accurate knowledge and understanding of what the school does well and what could be even better. The chair of the governing body visits frequently to gather first-hand information about leaders' work and support them as a critical friend.

It was a delight to meet your pupils. They like their school and teachers, and get along well with each other. Pupils know nearly everybody else in their very small school. They say they feel safe and happy in the family-like atmosphere and have an adult they can turn to if they are ever worried or upset. Pupils are happy to talk about their work and can explain how their teachers help them. During my visit, we saw pupils fruitfully engaged in activities and enjoying the challenging tasks they were given. They persevered well, and we saw some pupils working cooperatively to solve problems successfully in mathematics. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported well to develop their skills and understanding rapidly.

At the time of the previous inspection, it was recommended that the school's leaders made sure pupils made more rapid progress and that teaching improved further. You have acted successfully on these areas. For example, teachers make

more effective use of their teaching assistants and pupils are given suitably challenging work. Teachers understand the barriers that some pupils have to learning, and provide them with effective support to overcome them. They liaise closely with teaching assistants to plan suitable activities and to check on pupils' progress. Your insistence that teachers give meaningful feedback to pupils on their work is producing results. Teachers concentrate on what pupils need to do next to make progress. Pupils respond positively to teachers' advice and say it is helping them to improve.

Historic information shows that in 2016 although Year 6 pupils made strong progress in reading and writing, they made less progress in mathematics, and none reached the higher standards in writing. You have ensured that teachers have up-to-date training in teaching aspects of writing and mathematics. By working with other local schools to look at and compare pupils' written work, you have helped teachers understand the expected standards in writing and mathematics.

You have focused successfully on meeting the individual needs of pupils, improving teaching in writing and mathematics and ensuring that pupils attend more regularly. As a result, current pupils make much stronger progress in writing and mathematics than in the past. Attendance rates have increased noticeably, particularly for boys. However, this improving picture has not been sustained for enough time to eradicate all gaps between the attendance and performance of pupils in your school compared with other pupils nationally.

Parents are very positive about your school. In your own school's questionnaire and on the online survey, Parent View, all parents who responded said they would recommend your school to other parents. As well as being pleased with the progress their children were making, many parents commented on how happy their children are at the school. This was summed up by one comment: 'Watch them in the playground. I challenge you to find nicer, kinder, happier kids.'

Safeguarding is effective.

Staff are well aware of their safeguarding responsibilities. Several parents commented that adults at the school take great care of their children. Staff know each pupil well and recognise changes, for example, in behaviour. Almost all staff have had paediatric first-aid training, which provides more than adequate cover to treat pupils' minor injuries and respond quickly to medical emergencies.

School leaders ensure that all arrangements to safeguard pupils are effective and that detailed records are kept and stored securely. Staff are trained appropriately in keeping pupils safe. Adults know the policies and procedures to follow if they have a concern about a pupil. Health and safety guidelines are followed closely. For example, there are regular emergency evacuation practices, and comprehensive risk assessments are carried out for school trips.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection, I focused on how leaders ensure that current pupils, particularly the most able, make rapid progress in writing and mathematics, and how effectively pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported. I also investigated the impact of the headteacher's drive to improve attendance.
- Pupils make rapid progress from their starting points in writing. They are given many opportunities to write extended pieces for a wide range of purposes. They develop a clear understanding of different styles of writing. Teachers assess the quality of their writing accurately and provide pupils with helpful feedback on how to improve their work. As a consequence, pupils know what they need to do next, and act upon this advice. Pupils' handwriting shows clear development, although the quality of their spelling and punctuation is variable.
- Work in pupils' mathematics books shows clearly that they develop strong fluency, particularly in calculation. Teachers provide an effective range of activities to help pupils to develop their problem-solving and reasoning skills. Tasks are challenging and pupils are expected to use their mathematics in other subjects, such as measuring water displacement in science. Pupils' thinking is stretched appropriately, including suitable challenge for the most able. However, we agreed that sometimes teachers do not move pupils on to even more challenging work as soon as they could.
- You and your teaching team know your pupils well. You have clearly analysed the barriers that might restrict the progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, of whom there is a significant proportion in each class. Teachers make effective use of this knowledge to plan appropriate extra help for these pupils so that they make similar progress to their classmates.
- You identified attendance as an area for improvement. You know that with a small school population, one pupil's absence will greatly affect overall attendance figures. The steps you have taken, including warning parents of the impact of absence on pupils' learning, have reduced absence rates. Although, currently, attendance is better this year than last, it remains below national figures.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the improvement in current pupils' progress is sustained through consistently high levels of challenge
- they continue the drive to improve pupils' attendance so that it at least matches national figures.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Oxfordshire. This letter will

be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

James McVeigh
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and the chair of the governing body. I also spoke to a representative of the local authority by telephone. I visited all classrooms with you to see pupils engaged in their learning. Together with subject leaders, I looked at pupils' written work and the school's information about pupils' performance.

I examined school documents, including records about safeguarding, self-evaluation and governors' visits. I spoke to pupils informally in class and around the school at breaktimes. I considered 24 responses to the online survey, Parent View, including 18 written comments. There were no responses to the staff or pupil surveys.