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Mrs Saron Hetenyi
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Hetenyi

Short inspection of Soudley School

Following my visit to the school on 4 April 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 your school was judged to be good in November 2011.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. As headteacher, you provide clear-sighted and purposeful leadership to drive forward improvements. The governing body gives high-quality support and rigorous challenge, helping you to set the right direction for the school.

Working closely with your dedicated team of staff, you have made the necessary improvements while sustaining the best aspects of the school's provision.

The previous inspection recommended that teaching should challenge pupils in their learning and develop their writing further. To this end, you have provided a range of training and professional development for staff to extend their skills and develop effective practice. For example, better teaching has increased pupils' ability to write at length in a lively way, using interesting vocabulary. Consequently, pupils are reaching higher standards than previously. You acknowledge, though, that pupils' accuracy in spelling and punctuation needs further development.

You are ensuring, through focused teaching, that the most able pupils are challenged in their thinking in mathematics. Increasingly, teachers set work that improves pupils' ability to reason and solve problems. However, pupils lack regular opportunities to deepen their understanding by explaining their thinking. Nevertheless, more pupils are on track currently to achieve beyond the standards expected for their age.

The introduction of pre-school provision has been a positive step, helping to better prepare children for starting school. You have made good improvements to teaching and the use of resources in the early years, which is securing improved outcomes for children. As a result, a greater number of children are on track to achieve a good level of development this year.

A key strength of the school is the precise, individual guidance that teaching staff give pupils about their progress. This enables pupils to talk knowledgeably about what they can do well, make suggestions about how they can improve their work and be confident learners. Parents are full of praise for the way their children are valued as individuals and encouraged to do their best.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your governors make sure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that records are of good quality. Leaders' consistent checks on systems and practice promote a culture of vigilance in school. Staff receive regular training in the latest requirements for safeguarding. This ensures they are very clear about how to report any concerns. Recruitment and vetting procedures for appointing staff follow the statutory guidance stringently.

Pupils' attendance is in line with the national average and punctuality is good. Pupils enjoy coming to school and are keen to attend. Your staff work effectively with families to promote regular attendance and support parents with any problems in this respect. You ensure that pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe from any potential dangers, including on the internet. As a result, pupils say that they feel happy and secure in school and this view is supported overwhelmingly by parents.

Inspection findings

During the inspection, you and I met to discuss the school's progress since the previous inspection. We agreed the following lines of enquiry: how well writing skills are taught; how successfully leaders are developing the most able pupils' reasoning skills in mathematics; the quality of the provision in the early years, and how well the school keeps pupils safe.

- In 2016, writing results at the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2 were below average. As a result, you have taken swift action to improve teaching and raise teachers' expectations of pupils' achievement. You ensure that teachers provide clear targets to enable pupils to produce good-quality writing. Following extensive staff training, teachers are skilled in guiding and showing pupils how to achieve this. Pupils write regularly at length in a range of subjects and with obvious enjoyment as teachers plan interesting tasks. We looked at a range of pupils' books and agreed that pupils are extending their skills effectively and achieving better standards. For example, when writing about 'Daedalus and Icarus', Year 4 pupils used dialogue and imaginative vocabulary to good effect to

create atmosphere. However, on occasions, mistakes in spelling and punctuation hamper achievement and so too few pupils are writing at greater depth.

- While the most able pupils achieved the expected standards in mathematics in 2016 in both key stage 1 and key stage 2, few exceeded them. As a result of effective staff training, teachers are better able to plan learning to develop pupils' fluency in calculation skills and in understanding mathematical concepts. Pupils enjoy the 'passport' challenges where their knowledge and recall of number facts are challenged to the full. Work in pupils' books shows that this is having a positive impact on their mastery of numbers and they are reaching higher standards. Increasingly, teachers present pupils with tasks that require them to reason and think more deeply about mathematical problems. For example, pupils in Year 6 were able to use algebra to solve equations and explain why their reasoning was correct. Leaders acknowledge that this approach needs to become commonplace in day-to-day teaching in order to deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding further.
- You have successfully introduced provision for pre-school children in the early years. Children settle well into school because of effective transition arrangements with home. Leaders have strengthened the provision in the outdoor area so that activities are fun and purposeful. The emphasis on teaching children to speak clearly and listen carefully is helping to improve their self-confidence. Activities, such as finding the missing number in the 'Easter eggs' game, ensure children develop their language skills alongside their knowledge of numbers. New strategies for teaching early reading and writing skills are having a positive impact on children's learning. Outcomes in the Reception Year have improved in recent years and were broadly in line with the national figure in 2016. More children are currently on target to meet the early learning goals than previously.
- Pupils speak with great enthusiasm about their school and enjoy all it has to offer. They appreciate the individual attention they receive from school staff in doing their work and this helps them develop good attitudes to learning. As one pupil said, 'Talking about your learning makes you think really hard about what you can already do, and how you're going to do it better.'

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils' writing continues to improve, particularly their spelling and accurate use of punctuation
- teachers continue to set challenging tasks so more pupils go on to reach higher standards in mathematics.

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

Yours sincerely

Sandra Woodman
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection I met with you and discussed the school's self-evaluation, information about pupils' progress and improvements since the previous inspection. Together, we observed learning in classrooms and looked at a large number of pupils' books. I listened to several pupils of differing abilities reading. I met with pupils to talk about their experience of school life. Meetings were held with middle leaders, three governors and a representative of the local authority. I looked at a range of written evidence, including documents relating to safeguarding and attendance information. I took account of the views expressed by 19 parents who completed the online survey, Parent View, and their written comments, as well as the views of a member of staff who returned the questionnaire.