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Veronica Wallace  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Wallace

### **Short inspection of Staples Road Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 19 September 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 April 2013.

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

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

Staples Road Primary is a happy and welcoming school which has high expectations both of its pupils and of its staff. You and your leadership team work well together and are highly regarded by your pupils, their parents and your staff. This is evident from the positive responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and to the staff survey. One parent wrote: 'I find Staples Road to be an efficient, caring and incredibly well-run school.' This comment is reflective of the views of many parents. Staff morale is high, and it is clear that they have confidence in you as effective and supportive senior leaders.

You know the strengths of your school well, but also have a good understanding of what still needs to be done to improve the school further. Your approach towards school improvement is based on careful consideration of the school's performance. Your systems for monitoring the school's effectiveness are regular, timely and evaluative. For example, you quickly responded to the dip in pupils' outcomes at the end of key stage 2 this year, and produced a detailed action plan which aims to bring standards back to where they need to be.

Your school development plan is very closely linked to your school's self-evaluation document. You have correctly identified the key priorities for the coming year, and it is clear how you plan to measure the success of the actions you propose to take.

Importantly, you have linked members of the governing body to these school priorities, which means that they are able to monitor closely the impact of your actions and hold you and your leaders to account.

My meeting with your middle leaders demonstrated that they are well equipped to play their part in meeting the challenges you face. They have a good understanding of how they are able to support pupils who are at risk of underachieving. They know how to maintain high standards of teaching within their areas of responsibility.

Your pupils behave exceptionally well, both in lessons and when moving around the school. Your recently introduced system for recognising and rewarding positive behaviour has had an impact on pupils' attitudes. No pupils have been excluded from the school since it opened, whether permanently or for a fixed term. They speak with pride about their school and struggled to tell me how the school could be better than it is at present. They feel safe in school and say there is little bullying. They are taught well about how to keep safe, particularly about e-safety. You have developed pupils' leadership skills well by providing them with opportunities to serve as prefects or play leaders for younger pupils, or to be a member of the school council.

The previous inspection identified a number of areas for improvement which you have largely addressed over time. That inspection suggested that teachers provide pupils with work that matches their needs better in order to provide them with a more appropriate degree of challenge. In response to this, you chose to move away from setting pupils according to their ability for mathematics, so that all pupils had equal access to more challenging work when they were ready to attempt it. This meant that teachers had to plan their lessons more carefully, but has proven to be successful, and allows pupils to select tasks for themselves, under the guidance of their teachers.

You have also ensured that teachers provide clearer guidance to pupils so that they know how to improve and make better progress. Pupils are also given time to respond to their teachers' written comments when they are handed back their work. Pupils are now able to talk about what they are 'learning' rather than what they are 'doing'. You acknowledge that occasionally some teachers' comments still do not guide pupils in line with the school's marking policy so that they think about what they need to do to improve. You continue to monitor these teachers' performance closely.

Pupils' outcomes were not as strong as they should have been in 2017, both in key stage 1 and key stage 2. Outcomes at key stage 1 were much closer to national expectations, but pupils in Year 6 fared less well. You have provided a plausible explanation as to why this occurred and your key priority is to address this dip through the provision of consistently strong teaching and the development of skills which you have identified as undeveloped.

Members of the governing body challenge and support you and your senior team

appropriately. They have the necessary expertise and skills to provide this support, and ask pertinent questions so as to get to the heart of the matter under discussion. They also keep a close eye on how well you deliver on the actions identified in your school development plan. An external review of governance in 2016 helped governors to deploy their skills to best effect.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Safeguarding children is a strong aspect of this school's work. All staff have received and read the latest guidance, 'Keeping children safe in education' (2016), and they demonstrate a strong awareness of safeguarding issues. All staff have also undergone training in the government's 'Prevent' duty. Staff, including those who join the school mid-year, receive up-to-date training on safeguarding matters. The school's record of recruitment checks of the suitability of staff is compliant with current requirements.

Records kept by the school of children who are at risk of abuse or neglect, or who are deemed to be vulnerable, are very well maintained and informative. Records are kept securely and show clearly how concerns have been resolved. Appropriate external agencies are informed as and when necessary.

### **Inspection findings**

- To ascertain that the school remains good, one of my lines of enquiry was to look at how well the school's leaders could explain why pupils' outcomes dipped in 2017 and how quickly leaders had responded to this.
- You explained that the last year's Year 6 pupils had made expected progress up until Year 4. In Year 4, when the new style of assessments came into being, you underestimated how much national expectations had been raised. Better progress was made in Year 5, but there was not enough time to bring them up to the new higher standards by the end of Year 6.
- Your analysis of the marked test papers showed that some pupils did not complete all the questions in the time available and that pupils' skills in reading for inference were weak.
- As a result of your analysis and detailed evaluation of pupils' completed test papers, you have included appropriate actions in your school development plan. Systems to monitor the impact of these actions are thorough. Additionally, your pupils' progress meetings quickly identify any pupil that is at risk of underachieving. Early indications suggest that these actions are having a positive impact.
- My second line of enquiry was to consider how you are improving pupils' outcomes in mathematics. This was because progress in mathematics dipped in 2017 at the end of key stage 2.
- Following the return of the key stage 2 test papers and your analysis of pupils' responses, you quickly identified the cause. Although pupils' calculation skills appear to be strong, and they achieved well in the arithmetic paper, their

problem-solving skills were weaker. Hence, you have made improving problem solving, reasoning and number fluency a key feature of your school improvement plan. Teachers are ensuring that pupils develop these skills more strongly, not only in Year 6 but also in all classes throughout the school.

- I also looked at how successful your strategies are to improve the progress of the few disadvantaged pupils in the school. The difference between the achievement of these pupils and non-disadvantaged pupils nationally has not diminished sufficiently.
- Disadvantaged pupils feature in your school development plan and so their profile has been raised. Regular progress meetings monitor pupils' performance and evaluate the impact of the additional support funded by the pupil premium. Some disadvantaged pupils receive one-to-one sessions and benefit from the services of a learning mentor. Others are targeted through additional phonics or reading sessions. You have also identified that some disadvantaged pupils have low self-esteem and you have worked productively with them to tackle this. These initiatives are starting to have an impact but a continued focus is necessary to ensure that the differences diminish quicker.
- My fourth line of enquiry was to look at how accurately teachers assess pupils' progress. This was because you had previously failed to take account of the raised expectations when national curriculum levels ceased to be used and when the revised curriculum was implemented.
- You have held several training sessions for teachers to ensure greater accuracy in their assessments of pupils' progress. You have also worked well with other local schools to assure yourselves that teachers have a good understanding of the progress pupils make, including those working at greater depth.
- You have also nominated two experienced members of staff to lead on the moderation of pupils' work from Years 2 to 6 and have arranged extensive training for them so that staff have confidence in their guidance. My scrutiny of pupils' books, with some of the school's leaders, supports your view that there is an improvement in the evaluation of pupils' progress.
- My final line of enquiry looked at how effectively you are tackling the low attendance of disadvantaged pupils at the school.
- Overall attendance at the school is above the most recent national average. You are working well with the parents of disadvantaged pupils to improve their attendance. This is typically through attendance meetings which result in a bespoke attendance plan for the pupils in question. Your attendance data for the last academic year shows that disadvantaged pupils' attendance has improved term by term.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- The focus on the development of pupils' number fluency, problem-solving and reasoning skills is maintained across the school in order to improve their

outcomes in mathematics.

- Pupils' reading for inference across all subjects is developed.
- Differences in outcomes between disadvantaged pupils and non-disadvantaged pupils nationally continue to diminish.

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

Yours sincerely

John Daniell  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

I met with you and other senior leaders, as well as a group of middle leaders, to discuss progress since the previous inspection. I met with the chair and three other members of the governing body to gain their views on the school. I scrutinised a variety of sources of information, including your self-evaluation summary document, the school's plans for improvement, and assessment information for all year groups. I held a meeting to examine 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. I undertook observations of learning across the school, viewed work in pupils' books, and spoke with pupils about their learning when visiting lessons. I took account of the views of 35 staff who responded to the online survey. I also considered the 173 responses by parents to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View.