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Carl Litchfield
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Litchfield

Short inspection of Much Wenlock Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 10 October 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 October 2012.

This school continues to be good.

Since your appointment as headteacher in 2014, you and other staff and governors have ensured that the good quality of education in the school has been maintained. Much Wenlock Primary is a school at the heart of its community. The school has very good links with the local fire service, police community support officers and the town mayor. You make good use of your local area contacts to enhance learning for the pupils, for example through history projects. You have the support and respect of the overwhelming majority of parents and carers. They are appreciative of the school and the work that it does with their children. The high regard that your school is held in is reflected in the significant rise in the number of pupils on roll since the last inspection.

You and the governors of the school are clear about what the school does well and have taken action to bring about further improvement. You have correctly identified areas that require attention through the use of thorough analysis of assessment and the monitoring of teaching and learning. The use of questioning by teachers is an area that you are aware still needs attention in order to fully consolidate pupils' understanding. Questioning is not always used effectively to challenge pupils, so they do not have opportunities to explain their understanding or to justify an answer. In the majority of classrooms, particularly in Year 2 and Year 6, learning in mathematics and English is well supported by displays that include learning prompts and celebrations of success.

As a result of your focus on improving outcomes, a high proportion of pupils now

achieve the expected standards at the end of key stage 1 in reading, writing and mathematics. At the end of key stage 2, outcomes are particularly strong in reading.

The recent initiative that you, together with the deputy headteacher, have introduced of having individual writing targets, personalised to the needs of each pupil, is already having an impact in terms of progress in grammar, punctuation and spelling.

You are providing individual coaching for all teachers to enhance the quality of teaching in mathematics. The focus that you and other leaders have placed on mastery of the mathematics curriculum is ensuring that teachers' expectations of all pupils are high. You are aware that this has not always been the case and that some pupils, especially the most able and girls, have not reached their full potential.

Leaders' action plans rightly focus on achieving further improvement in outcomes for all pupils. This is resulting in more pupils achieving the higher standards in writing and mathematics by the end of each key stage.

You are well supported by governors, who monitor the progress that pupils make very carefully. Governors are an effective force within school and provide both challenge and support.

You are rightly proud of the impact that the school has on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils enjoy visits to a range of places of worship of different faiths and religions. This helps them develop positive values of respect and tolerance. Pupils understand that they have responsibilities, which include how they look after each other, how they behave and how to make the right choices. Almost all of the classes in the school took part in the project 'The Honest Woodcutter', a project about being truthful and the consequences of not being honest. Pupils have good opportunities to take on additional responsibilities, including membership of the school council and becoming house captains. These opportunities also contribute to pupils' understanding of fundamental British values, such as democracy and the rule of law. Leaders and other staff encourage pupils to model the core values of the school, including empathy and compassion. This is reflected not only in displays around the school but also in the attitude and conduct of the pupils. They are well-mannered, polite and considerate of others. While overall attendance is in line with the national average, you are determined to ensure that no groups of pupils are disadvantaged by lower attendance.

The school took over the management of the on-site Nursery in September 2017. You have grasped the opportunity that this offers to develop even better transition between age groups within the early years foundation stage and into key stage 1. The outdoor areas are inviting, well equipped and promote curiosity. You and other staff ensure that you make good use of the outdoor area through forest school education, which is providing opportunities for pupils to develop practical skills. Parental engagement in outdoor learning is high, with many joining in with 'Welly Wednesdays'.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. All of the necessary recruitment checks are carried out with rigour. You are able to demonstrate the positive impact on pupils where you have worked effectively with outside agencies, including social care, to provide support. Both you and the governors have recognised where systems for safeguarding pupils could be further improved and have planned for an external audit to be carried out in the near future.

Pupils benefit from a curriculum that helps to keep them safe. This includes important work on e-safety. For example, pupils in Year 4 were able to talk confidently about how to manage risks they might face when using the internet. Younger pupils benefit from learning about road safety. Through personal, social, health and economic education, you ensure that there is a focus on the well-being of pupils, which will help them now and in their future lives.

Inspection findings

- In 2016, there was a marked difference in the achievement of girls and boys at the end of the early years in writing. The proportion of girls achieving the early learning goal was lower than that for boys. Your own analysis of assessment shows that this is still the case at the end of the early years as well as at the end of key stage 1. In 2016, no girls achieved the greater depth standard in writing and although a small group did in 2017, boys still performed better. You are fully aware of this and have taken action to improve the quality of teaching and learning in writing and to better meet the needs of girls. All pupils now have personalised targets matched to individual next steps. Pupils' progress towards meeting their targets is tracked very carefully by teachers and subject leaders. The most recent pupil progress information shows that there are clear indications that disadvantaged pupils are catching up with others.
- The recently appointed deputy headteacher has taken over the leadership of mathematics. You have both correctly identified that teachers' expectations of what pupils can do have not always been high enough. A coaching programme for teachers is now improving the quality of teaching of mathematics further. It focuses on mastery of the curriculum and pupils being given opportunities to apply their skills in problem-solving and reasoning challenges. Nevertheless, ensuring that the most able pupils are appropriately challenged remains an area that is still being developed.
- Evidence from leaders' evaluation of assessment information shows that there has been some improvement in rates of progress from key stage 1 to key stage 2 in writing and mathematics, but rates of progress in these subjects are slower than in reading. Your school improvement plan includes actions to increase the monitoring of pupils' progress and to provide interventions for pupils who need to make more progress.
- Your work to develop the role of subject leaders is further strengthening leadership. New leaders are benefiting from coaching from senior leaders and also

through training offered by the local authority, for example through participation in local subject network groups with other schools. This is allowing them to develop their skills and widen their experience of a leadership role.

- You rightly focus on the attendance of pupils. Although attendance for all pupils is in line with the national average, you have recognised that some pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are disadvantaged do not attend school as much as they should. You are continuing to work closely with the education welfare officer to ensure that the attendance of identified pupils improves.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they further improve attendance for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities by strengthening strategies to make sure that all pupils come to school regularly and on time
- teachers consistently set suitably challenging tasks and activities for the most able pupils so that more reach the higher levels in mathematics and writing
- questioning is matched effectively to pupils' abilities, needs and interests, especially for girls, to probe pupils' understanding and provide more opportunities for them to explain their thinking.

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

Yours sincerely

Joanne Evans
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I discussed the work of the school with you and the deputy headteacher, two members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority. I checked a range of documentation, including leaders' evaluation of effectiveness, including a report of the impact of the work of governors. I examined information about pupils' achievement.

I visited classes, with you, to observe teaching, learning and assessment and I checked on progress made in pupils' maths and English workbooks.

I scrutinised the school's safeguarding procedures, including policies and checks on staff employed in this school. I talked informally with a group of pupils about how safe they felt in school.

I spoke to parents and carers about their views of the school and I considered the 55 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View). I also considered the responses expressed by staff through Ofsted's questionnaire about the school and its leadership.