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Mrs Jennie Dwight
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Dwight

Short inspection of Hardwicke Parochial Academy

Following my visit to the school on 1 November 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 predecessor 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 last inspection. The proportion of pupils in the early years achieving a good level of development has risen to well above the national figure. Good teaching of phonics ensures that high numbers of pupils are successful in the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1. Improvements to teaching in key stage 1 have increased the numbers of pupils in Year 2 achieving expected and higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Effective teaching in key stage 2 means that pupils' achievement at the end of the key stage is at least in line with, and often well above, that of pupils nationally.

Since your appointment in September 2017, you have quickly gained a good overview of the school, your pupils and their families and developed positive relationships. You have high expectations for pupils and staff and act as an effective role model, which enables you to gain their respect. You work collaboratively and effectively with the newly appointed special educational needs coordinator, other leaders and teachers. You have undertaken a thorough evaluation of the school's work and this has helped you to plan actions to address the school's main priorities.

Pupils are happy and enthusiastic learners. Adults have high aspirations for pupils and develop strong and supportive working relationships with them. This gives pupils the confidence to improve their learning. As a result, they thoroughly enjoy discussing their work, persevere when learning gets tricky and are keen to succeed.

You and other leaders, including the trust's head of school improvement and governors, carry out a range of effective activities to check the work of the school. This helps you to hold staff to account. You use your new assessment and tracking system well in order to check on pupils' progress. This helps you to take action to improve teaching when pupils need to catch up. Your accurate evaluation of the school's work has helped you to identify that a few disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities need to make better progress. You are also aware that you need to maintain the consistency of teaching in key stages 1 and 2 and the early years to help pupils reach the highest standards they are capable of. You are fully committed to taking the appropriate action to ensure that this happens.

The vast majority of parents who expressed their views say their children enjoy coming to school and that staff are friendly and welcoming. A very small minority of parents have concerns about the way that the school supports their children. You are making concerted efforts to improve communication to gain parents' trust and confidence. Many parents say that you are extremely approachable and they praise the way that teachers support their children. Typical comments are 'This is a fantastic school run by a fantastic team with a great family feel' and 'My children love coming to school'.

Safeguarding is effective.

The caring ethos is evident and pupils' safety and well-being are paramount. You have provided relevant training for staff, which helps to ensure that they are vigilant and understand when pupils may be at risk. They know the appropriate action to take when they have concerns and you keep detailed and secure records of referrals. You quickly seek the help of external agencies when pupils require additional help or support and routinely monitor and follow up concerns. This helps you to identify when you need to take further action. You have a good understanding of vulnerable pupils' specific needs and parents typically comment that you deal with issues quickly, which helps you to resolve them. Pupils who benefit from emotional and social support say that it really helps them to remain calm and concentrate on their learning.

School leaders and the trust work closely with governors to check safeguarding procedures to ensure that they are rigorous. The school carries out all the necessary pre-employment checks to ensure that adults are safe to work with pupils. This information is recorded in detail on the school's single central record. The school has clear and detailed policies and risk assessments alongside well-understood procedures in the event of an emergency.

Pupils understand what constitutes bullying and know how to stay safe when using the internet. Pupils say they feel safe in school and are reassured that there is someone to turn to if they are upset. Staff set consistently high expectations and pupils' good understanding of the school's behaviour rules enables them to focus on their learning.

Inspection findings

- We agreed that my first line of enquiry would investigate the effectiveness of teaching in key stage 1, particularly in writing and mathematics. Leaders have taken concerted action to ensure that assessment precisely identifies how to improve teaching. As a result of well-planned teaching, outcomes in phonics in Year 1 and pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 1 rose considerably in 2017.
- The next line of enquiry focused on the school's actions to reverse the decline in achievement in reading and mathematics at the end of key stage 2 last year. You use your new assessment system very effectively to support teachers to identify gaps in pupils' learning. For instance, you have recognised that teachers need to improve pupils' comprehension skills in reading and develop their fluency in mathematics. Consequently, teachers now plan teaching that more specifically meets pupils' needs. This supports pupils to read in greater depth and tackle mathematical tasks of increasing difficulty. During our joint observations of learning, there was a positive buzz of activity as pupils enthusiastically challenged themselves to 'do it, stretch it and solve it'. Good demonstrations and questions from teachers support pupils' understanding well. As a result, pupils confidently practise and apply their calculation skills to solve problems in mathematics. In reading, pupils accurately locate and interpret information and give explanations that show they understand what they have read.
- My third line of enquiry investigated how well teaching supports disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The newly appointed special educational needs coordinator has quickly taken action to identify the specific needs of pupils in the school. This includes those who are vulnerable and need additional help to deal with their emotions. The nurture room provides a quiet oasis where pupils can sit and reflect or receive counselling support. Pupils say they enjoy learning in the nurture room as it helps them to calm down when they are feeling upset or angry and this prepares them well for learning. You have worked closely with all leaders and teachers to plan focused academic support, which is also having a positive effect. During our learning walk together, we saw that pupils and adults have formed extremely effective working partnerships and adults model learning well. This helps pupils to understand what to do and, so, they sustain concentration and become absorbed in their learning.
- To determine the impact of your support, we jointly reviewed the school's current school assessment information and pupils' learning over time. These activities revealed that the vast majority of pupils in key stages 1 and 2 are making good progress in all subjects. There are striking examples of accelerated progress. However, you recognise that some disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make less progress and need continued support and targeted teaching to help them to catch up. You are also conscious of the need to maintain consistency in the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics in key stages 1 and 2 to sustain and build on recent improvements.
- During the inspection, I considered how effectively the school communicates with parents. You have planned meetings for parents, produce regular newsletters

and have updated the class website pages. Parents are pleased that they now receive more information, which helps them to understand how the school is supporting their children. You are aware that a very small minority of parents have concerns about communication and realise some aspects of the website need updating. You are keen to seek a range of opportunities to further develop communication so that you can continue to gain parents' support.

- My final line of enquiry involved reviewing leaders' actions to improve attendance for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. This is because, over time, their attendance has been lower than that of other pupils. You and other leaders work hard to reduce absence by arranging meetings with parents and providing emotional, social and behavioural support for pupils who need it. You have plans in place to award certificates for good attendance. Your actions have helped you to develop positive partnerships with parents, which encourage pupils to attend school more regularly. Attendance is improving as a result. You recognise that improvements must be sustained so that pupils can benefit from all that the school has to offer. Leaders and governors routinely monitor attendance figures to ensure that your actions are making a difference.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- absence continues to be tackled robustly so that the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities further improves
- improved teaching continues to accelerate progress for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities who need to catch up
- teaching in key stages 1 and 2 consistently challenges pupils to achieve the highest possible standards they are capable of
- communication with parents continues to improve so that parents have confidence in the school's actions to support their children.

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

Yours sincerely

Catherine Beeks
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and other leaders responsible for special educational needs, English and mathematics. I also met with a group of governors and the head of school improvement for the trust. During our meetings, we discussed the school's latest assessment information and I reviewed the school's self-evaluation summary and development plan. I scrutinised the school's single central record and we discussed a wide range of matters relating to safeguarding procedures, training and pupils' welfare and safety. Together we undertook a learning walk to review learning in mathematics and English in several classes across key stages 1 and 2. We spoke with pupils in lessons and during breaktime. I carried out a focused scrutiny of pupils' work in English and mathematics in several year groups. I also met with a group of 14 pupils to gain their views of school and to hear some of them read. I talked to several parents at the beginning of the school day, considered the results of a recent parental survey and took account of 49 responses from parents to the online survey Parent View.