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Matthew Watson
Head of School
Loxley CofE Community Primary School
Loxley
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Warwickshire
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Dear Mr Watson

Short inspection of Loxley CofE Community Primary School

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 the school was judged to be good in September 2012.

This school continues to be good.

You, other leaders and governors have made sure that the strengths noted at the school's last inspection have been maintained. Since the inspection five years ago, Loxley has federated with two other small schools to form the Stratford Rural Schools Federation. The three schools share a governing body and are overseen by an executive headteacher. You joined the school two years ago. These changes to governance and leadership have not had an adverse impact on the school's effectiveness. On the contrary, the school has continued to move forwards and make improvements. All members of staff who completed an online questionnaire agreed that the school is a lot better than it was before and that they are proud to work at Loxley.

There are clear strengths in leadership. You work closely and effectively with the executive headteacher. You have also built a strong staff team at Loxley. Staff said that they value the opportunities they have for professional development and that they feel trusted to take risks and take on responsibilities. One staff member commented: 'The headteacher of our school is an enthusiastic and positive role model who helps the children and staff to reach their full potential in a safe and happy environment.'

Your evaluation of the school's effectiveness is accurate. It points out what is working well and where further work is needed. Your action plans show clearly the steps you intend to take next. They include measurable targets, but in their current form the targets are not as helpful as they could be, because they are expressed as

percentages and so lack precision. We talked about adjusting the targets so that they are an accurate representation of what you are aiming for with the small number of pupils in each year group. This would make it easier for leaders and governors to gauge success.

Several parents who spoke to me said that the 'family' feel was a key reason for having chosen to send their children to Loxley. One parent said: 'The children love school. They like how they are greeted by name every morning come rain or shine.' You and the staff know every pupil very well. Relationships between staff and pupils and their families are warm and empathetic. You believe in promoting pupils' mental well-being and in building their confidence, so that they are ready and eager to learn. Because you emphasise caring for pupils and are successful in meeting their individual needs, you find that you are increasingly admitting pupils who have not thrived at other schools or who have special educational needs. Parents appreciate the efforts you and the staff go to. One commented: 'Loxley has turned my son around into a positive, happy child who has rediscovered his love of learning.'

In recent years, Loxley has admitted an increasing number of pupils who are educated partly at school and partly by their parents at home (flexi-schooled). You are supportive of parents who have made this decision. Parents who spoke to me said how much they value your understanding and your willingness to work with them to educate their children.

Pupils are clearly happy at school and enjoy learning. They try hard and are very responsive to the staff who work with them. They join in readily with the school's traditional activities. For example, on the morning of this inspection, pupils came excitedly into the playground struggling under the weight of large pumpkins, eager to take part in a competition to find the best one. Pupils are proud of their achievements. At lunchtime, a group of pupils asked to read to me the 'slam' poems that they had written earlier. They read with confidence. Their poems were imaginative and showed that they had a good understanding of performance poetry. Pupils behave well and play happily together in the small playground. They chat sociably at lunchtimes and are clearly very pleased with the recently introduced hot lunches.

Every inch of space in your very small school is used well. Displays in classrooms and corridors and work in pupils' books show that pupils experience a rich curriculum. You also offer a wide range of after-school clubs.

You have dealt successfully with the areas for improvement highlighted at the last inspection. Teachers make sure that teaching assistants are fully briefed for what they need to do in lessons. However, there is still some work to do to make sure that teaching assistants use technical language with precision. You have focused on improving pupils' writing skills. Your assessments show that pupils' achievement in writing no longer lags behind that in reading and mathematics.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding at Loxley. You, other leaders and governors have made sure that the school's arrangements to keep pupils safe are fit for purpose. You and the staff know the children and their families very well. You take swift action to support potentially vulnerable pupils, including making referrals to the local authority where necessary. You keep detailed and well-organised records that document the actions taken and the outcomes.

Your curriculum emphasises teaching pupils to understand risk and to know what they need to do to keep themselves safe, including when using the internet. There are many pictures and posters around the school that highlight safeguarding issues and that are helpful to both pupils and adults. Parents, pupils and staff raised no concerns about pupils' safety or their behaviour. Every pupil from Year 1 upwards who was present in school during the inspection completed an online questionnaire. Every one of them strongly agreed that there is an adult in school that they trust and that they can talk to if they are worried.

Inspection findings

- You and the staff have a secure understanding of individual pupils' starting points and their potential barriers to learning. You set clear targets for pupils to aim towards and make sure that they understand them. Targets are set out in the front of pupils' books or on displays on classroom walls. You track the progress that pupils make carefully and regularly and take steps to support anyone who is in danger of falling behind, or who needs help to catch up on the standards expected for their age.
- You work closely with a wide range of external agencies to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. You also work well with parents of pupils who are flexi-schooled, sharing information about the topics pupils are studying and what is expected of them. Your assessments show that almost all pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are flexi-schooled, make or exceed the progress that you expect of them over the course of a year.
- Your self-evaluation rightly highlights the need to raise children's achievement at the end of Reception. You and the early years staff are working well to make sure that children's starting points are identified accurately and that steps are taken to boost their progress and help them to catch up where necessary.
- You and the staff are taking determined action to make sure that current pupils make the progress they should in mathematics. You clearly explained the reasons why a small number of pupils did not make strong progress in mathematics in 2017. You and the mathematics leader are taking effective steps to make sure that pupils' progress in mathematics is at least in line with what you expect. The mathematics leader is carefully monitoring the impact of the recently implemented scheme of work. She is confident that there is now a more consistent approach across the school and that pupils are being taught the necessary skills in a timely way. She gives good support to teachers to help them

manage the challenges of teaching mathematics in mixed-age classes.

- The pupils who talked to me and showed me their work in mathematics talked knowledgeably about what they had been learning so far this year. They said that they enjoy mathematics, and that the work is challenging and not too easy. They also said that they enjoy helping each other to solve problems. In lessons, pupils thought deeply about problems and applied themselves readily to their work. Some showed great interest and enthusiasm as they tried to work out how many different sums of money could be made with three coins. They set about their work systematically and used their mathematical knowledge to good effect.
- Teaching assistants had a clear understanding of what the pupils needed to learn in mathematics. However, there were occasions when their interventions slowed rather than enhanced pupils' learning. For example, their use of technical language was not always accurate, and explanations of methods sometimes lacked clarity.
- Your headline attendance figures look to be very low. However, this is because of the impact of the pupils who are flexi-schooled. When pupils attend for three days a week, the two days that they are taught at home are included in the school's overall figures as authorised absence. You keep careful track of the attendance of the flexi-schooled pupils, to make sure that they attend as frequently as possible on the days that have been agreed with their parents. Your figures show that, on this basis, the flexi-schooled pupils' attendance matches that of others in the school. Where parents have agreed that their children will attend for three days a week, they do so, unless they are ill. Your current attendance figures for those who attend full-time are in line with the national average.
- You work closely with the families of pupils who are flexi-schooled. You make sure to celebrate work that pupils have done at home in assemblies, for example. Parents sign a contract which sets out what is expected of them, and what the school will do.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- further training and support are provided for teaching assistants in mathematics, to strengthen their subject knowledge and understanding of technical language
- efforts continue to boost children's attainment at the end of the Reception Year
- the targets in the school's action plans are amended to show numbers, rather than percentages, based on challenging targets for individual pupils.

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

Yours sincerely

Linda McGill
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

At the start of the day I walked round the school with you and the executive headteacher and greeted staff in their classrooms. I met and spoke to some parents as they brought their children in to school in the morning. I met with you and the executive headteacher to discuss the areas of focus for the inspection. Later in the day, we met to discuss the school's approach to protecting pupils and keeping them safe. We also discussed assessment information and attendance. I visited all classrooms to look at teaching and learning, and spoke informally to some pupils about their work. I met pupils from Years 5 and 6. They told me about their work in mathematics and showed me their books. I met the chair of the governing body and two other governors. I observed pupils at lunchtime. I also listened to four pupils who asked to read poems they had written. I took account of the views of 10 parents as expressed on the Parent View website and in their free-text comments. I spoke to one parent on the telephone. I also considered the views of 26 pupils and nine staff members who had completed online questionnaires.