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Emily Smith  
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Dear Miss Smith

### **Short inspection of Dean Valley Community Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 5 December 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.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education since the last inspection. It has created a delightful school, in extensive attractive grounds, in which pupils achieve well and develop into mature, articulate and caring young people. The school is very popular with parents. A typical comment expressed in a parental survey is, 'It is a fantastic school which seems to strike a balance between academic progress and personal development.' The governing body has shaped the school's mission, culture and ethos. Pupils are very polite and friendly. Teachers' expectations are high, and the curriculum has a good impact on pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. Since the previous inspection, pupils' use of homophobic or derogatory language has reduced significantly. This is partly because the curriculum is peppered with references to sexuality and because teachers make sure that pupils develop a deep respect for other people's differences.

There are significant strengths in the quality of art and design across the school and in the teaching of reading, particularly in key stage 2. To make teaching more effective, leaders now need to increase the complexity of teachers' questions to pupils.

Since the last inspection, teaching and pupils' outcomes in mathematics have improved. They are now a strength. Pupils have to reason and think about their methods to solve calculations and problems, and spend longer making sure that

they fully understand an idea before moving onto more complex calculations.

Leaders have accurately identified that writing and pupils' achievement in key stage 1 are areas which need to be further improved. Pupils' writing in history, geography and religious education is not as high quality as it is in their English work.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Pupils said that they feel safe and that there is someone that they can go to if they feel troubled or worried. The curriculum gives pupils a good understanding of how to stay safe, particularly when they are playing games or socialising online. Leaders have created a culture in which pupils' differences are valued and celebrated. Safeguarding is highly visible around the school, for example with reference to posters, signs and telephone contact numbers.

Leaders have taken action to make sure that staff are well qualified, for example, in first aid and bereavement counselling. Similarly, leaders regularly inform staff about concerns about attendance, behaviour, risks or other safeguarding issues in weekly meetings. They work very well with parents and other agencies, such as health and social services professionals, and are persistent in following concerns even when there is some resistance from a family.

### **Inspection findings**

- In this inspection, I followed five particular lines of enquiry. The first was to find out how well leaders tackle an area for improvement from the last inspection: to improve teaching in mathematics. Pupils' outcomes at the end of each key stage have risen so that, for example in 2017, every pupil attained the expected standard by the end of Year 6. Pupils made well above average progress. They said that mathematics is now one of their favourite subjects and it is challenging but not too difficult. The mathematics leader set out a very clear rationale to improve teaching and has made sure that pupils, in each class, have a much higher exposure to solving problems and explaining their thinking and methods of calculating.
- I investigated how well leaders have tackled the second area for improvement outlined at the previous inspection. The school has made very good progress in raising pupils' awareness and understanding of derogatory language and homophobia. Leaders have adjusted the curriculum to make sure that teaching includes references to equality and diversity, for example, different families and sexualities. Leaders have also ensured that books available to pupils support equality and diversity. The school is working towards a nationally recognised award in this area. Bullying incidents remain very rare as confirmed by pupils. Pupils said that pupils who have different sexualities or gender identities would be safe and included at the school, 'because there is no discrimination'.
- My third line of enquiry centred on the most able pupils in key stage 1, particularly their progress in English. Leaders have made slight changes to how phonics is taught and made sure that staff received additional training. It has

resulted in pupils' higher attainment in Year 1 in the national phonics screening check in 2017. Leaders had already identified that the most able pupils at the end of Reception make steady progress, but could attain higher standards by the end of Year 2. The governors, in the minutes of governing body meetings, recorded that they have challenged the school about whether pupils' progress could be faster in key stage 1. The most able pupils' work indicates that they make good progress in writing. There are times when, despite having advanced writing skills, pupils only complete simple activities, such as writing captions or phrases, when they could be applying what they have learned in English lessons. In particular, this is the case in history, geography and religious education. In history, pupils do not extend their historical vocabulary, perspective or understanding of different sources as well as they could.

- Pupils' attainment in reading in 2017 and the progress they made were well above average. This was my fourth line of enquiry. The leader for English has ensured that there is broad range of texts for pupils to read and there is a relentless focus on developing pupils' reading comprehension, inference and deduction. There is a large number of volunteers who read with the pupils and talk to them about their reading. Aloud, pupils read fluently and use punctuation and grammar as important markers to help them to read with expression. They read widely a range of authors and types of books and texts, and this has enabled them to compare and contrast different authors. In writing, a few boys and some of the most able pupils, make only average progress. In lessons, some teachers ask a narrow range of closed questions to these groups and set tasks that do not require pupils to think deeply about their work. Despite being able writers, some pupils do not apply their skills as well as they could, because there is a lack of space in the pre-populated worksheets for them to write at length. In history and geography, pupils' work does not fully reflect the aims and subject-specific skills that pupils should develop. Pupils have a good sense of chronology, for example. However, they do not have as much chance as they could to interpret different historical sources, consider different interpretations or write at length using historical vocabulary.
- Finally, following my review of the website, I tried to find out how well you and the governing body make sure that the national website requirements are met. There is an appropriate system in place to review the website and to check that policies and documents meet statutory requirements. Some of the details of the different policies, such as the special educational needs (SEN) information report and the pupil premium strategy, were not correct at the start of the inspection. By the end, all of the clerical errors had been rectified.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers ask pupils more complex questions, which make pupils think more deeply about their work
- pupils, particularly boys, replicate the quality of writing in their English work in other subjects, such as history, geography and religious education

- pupils' history and geography work is higher quality and builds more effectively on the aims and skills outlined in the national curriculum.

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

Yours sincerely

Allan Torr

**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

I carried out joint observations with you in four classes. I looked through a sample of pupils' work from the previous and current academic years. I spoke with some pupils at lunchtime and also more formally with a group of Years 5 and 6 pupils, who I heard reading.

I met with two members of the governing body and a group of school leaders and looked through a range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding.

The school is above the government's current floor standards and does not meet its definition of a coasting school.