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Mrs Alison Cooke
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Dear Mrs Cooke

Short inspection of Slimbridge Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 28 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.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You and your leaders are determined that all pupils receive the best possible education and their welfare is at the heart of all that you do. While you have high expectations of pupils' academic achievement, you do not lose sight of developing important life skills such as independence and resilience. The school has made considerable improvements since the previous inspection because of your commitment.

You have an accurate and realistic understanding of the school's current performance. Your plans clearly set out what needs to improve further with specific and measurable targets. For example, you identified that not enough pupils reached a high standard in mathematics in 2016 and took prompt action to address this. Teachers set more challenging work for the most able pupils than previously. However, pupils lack regular opportunities to explain their thinking and methods that would deepen their understanding still further. Nevertheless, a greater number of pupils in both key stage 1 and key stage 2 are achieving higher standards this year.

The previous inspection recommended that pupils' achievement in writing needed improving with stronger links made to pupils' reading. To this end, you have introduced an interesting range of literature that is inspiring pupils in their writing. You provide a range of training and professional development to extend teachers'

skills and improve their practice. Effective teaching is increasing pupils' ability to write in an engaging way, using imaginative vocabulary. Standards in writing show improvement, although you are aware there is more to do in this respect.

You have a relentless focus on improving the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and this is reflected in their improved rates of progress. You improved the way the school supports these pupils to promote their learning and self-confidence. You work effectively with families to promote greater involvement in their children's learning and more regular attendance. Consequently, these pupils are on track to achieve as well as others in school.

Parents are extremely positive about the school's work. They praise the approachability of you and your staff. They greatly value the school's caring and nurturing ethos, where pupils are encouraged to be considerate and look out for each other. They state that their children go from 'strength to strength' in their learning because lessons are enjoyable yet challenging. Many say that the school is 'fantastic', with several commenting on the interesting curriculum that focuses on outdoor learning and local history. Parents clearly see the school as an important feature of the local community.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding because you, your staff and your governors give the safety of pupils a high priority. All staff and governors are appropriately trained in identifying possible signs of risk and harm. School records show that staff are up to date in their training in recognising the dangers of extremism and radicalisation. Statutory guidance for recruiting and vetting new staff is followed diligently. The governor responsible for safeguarding frequently checks that the school's single central record is maintained accurately. Governors also check that their policies and procedures work effectively and consult staff about how they might make any improvements.

Records are of good quality. Systems for referring concerns about pupils have been tightened and you monitor high-priority cases frequently. This ensures that pupils and their families receive the best possible support from the school and other agencies. Parents recognise the lengths to which you go to provide a welcoming and inclusive environment for all pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Your work to personalise support plans for these pupils ensures that all members of the school community are cared for and valued.

Pupils attend well and are seldom late for school. Pupils confirm that they feel safe in school because of the vigilance of staff and because there is 'always someone you can talk to'. Events such as 'Bikeability' and internet safety training ensure that pupils are well prepared to face risk in society. They have a good understanding of what constitutes bullying and how to combat this. They say that bullying does not happen often.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection, I met with you to discuss the school's progress since the previous inspection. We agreed the following lines of enquiry: how well leaders have increased progress rates in writing and mathematics to enable pupils to reach high standards; how successful leaders have been in improving the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and how well the school keeps pupils safe.
- While the most able pupils achieved the expected standards in mathematics in 2016, few exceeded them. You quickly provided high-quality training for staff alongside external consultants. Teachers are now better able to plan work to develop pupils' competence in calculation skills. They are skilled in developing pupils' understanding of mathematical concepts, using practical resources. The work in pupils' books shows that this is having a positive impact on their mastery of numbers and place value. Currently, pupils are making faster progress. Increasingly, teachers present pupils with tasks that require them to think more deeply to solve complex problems. However, pupils' ability to explain their reasoning and methods is not extensive enough to deepen their knowledge and understanding still further.
- In 2016, few pupils achieved beyond the expected standard in writing, especially in key stage 1. To address this, you have implemented a new teaching approach to link story telling with writing. During my visit, we saw that, since the start of the year, pupils write with greater fluency and with increasingly accurate spelling. They use their imagination well to create characters and atmosphere when writing stories and poems. In the writing task about Inuits, Year 2 pupils demonstrated their ability to write in a more formal way. Nonetheless, you acknowledge that pupils do not yet show the consistent mastery of different styles of writing needed to reach higher standards.
- You are successful in addressing any differences in achievement between disadvantaged pupils and their classmates. This is because you monitor their progress precisely and continually look for ways to improve the support for these pupils. Additional teaching helps pupils overcome any difficulties in their learning and builds their self-esteem. New initiatives, such as the 'Thrive' programme, enable pupils with emotional and social difficulties to manage their behaviour effectively. This is resulting in better progress and outcomes for these pupils.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers continue to help pupils develop their reasoning skills by requiring them to explain their methods and thinking more extensively
- pupils continue to develop their writing skills so that they achieve the highest possible standards.

I am copying this letter to the co-chairs of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Gloucestershire. This letter

will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Sandra Woodman
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and discussed the school's self-evaluation, information about pupils' progress and improvements since the previous inspection. Together, we observed learning in classrooms and looked at a range of pupils' work in books. I listened to several pupils reading from key stage 1 and key stage 2. I met with pupils to talk about their experience of school life. I held meetings with middle leaders and with three governors. In addition, I spoke with a representative of the local authority. I looked at a range of written evidence, including documents relating to safeguarding and attendance information. I took account of the written comments of 41 parents who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, their written comments and the views of parents who spoke to me before the start of the school day. I also took account of the views of 21 members of staff and the 51 pupils who returned the online questionnaires.