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Mrs Penelope Knight
Executive Headteacher
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Lydbury North
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Dear Mrs Knight

Short inspection of Lydbury North CofE (A) 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 November 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since the previous inspection there have been a number of changes. You have become an executive headteacher and oversee two schools, Lydbury North CofE Primary and Onny CofE Primary. You are highly committed to the school and well respected for the work you undertake. You and the governors have implemented a successful leadership structure, appointing a skilful school business manager, a lead teacher and a parent support adviser to ensure that pupils continue to receive a good education in this small school.

You, other leaders and governors have worked hard to make sure that the school has continued to move forward since the last inspection. The effective Nursery provision, which is now in place, has increased numbers in the school and ensured that there is effective transition into the Reception class. You have enhanced the skills and talents of the staff team through the federation arrangements, and made sure that they receive the support they need to do their best.

Parents appreciate and value the support their children receive, and the family feel of this very small school. Your pupils are friendly, well mannered and respectful. Relationships across the school between adults and pupils and between pupils themselves are strong. All the parents who spoke to me at the start of the day and those who commented online are overwhelmingly positive about all aspects of the school. A typical comment from a parent was, 'The work of all the staff at Lydbury North is excellent. I am confident my child really enjoys his school life, is well taught and very well cared for whilst at school.'

You have tackled the recommendations arising from the previous inspection well. You and other leaders, including governors, have a clear view of how to drive the school forward. You have improved pupils' confidence when tackling problems. During this inspection, I saw pupils showing initiative, making decisions, and working independently and collaboratively. For example, in the key stage 2 class, pupils were able to undertake mathematical problem-solving with their partners and without adult support. They displayed resilience and independence when persevering with the task. You were also asked to ensure that there were more opportunities to write for sustained lengths of time in literacy and other subjects. Since then there has been a strong focus on improving pupils' writing although you recognise that there is still more to do. You are also aware that there could be more consistent challenge for the most able pupils.

The wider curriculum is organised into topics which excite pupils. You overcome the potential isolation of such a small rural primary school by offering trips to enhance the curriculum and broaden pupils' horizons. For example, pupils spoke enthusiastically about a recent trip to Chester Zoo where they learned about endangered animals. The annual residential trip to an outdoor learning centre is very popular with older pupils. One pupil who spoke to me was inspired by the activities experienced on the trip, including canoeing and potholing. Well above-average attendance rates confirm how much pupils enjoy school.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding procedures are fit for purpose. Staff vetting and checking systems are rigorous. All parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, agree that pupils are happy, safe and well cared for by the staff. Staff attend regular training to ensure that safeguarding remains at the forefront of everyone's minds. You and other staff work closely with the local authority and outside agencies, where necessary, to ensure that children's needs are assessed and met and they are kept safe.

All pupils who spoke to me told me they feel safe in school. Pupils understand what constitutes bullying and say it is rare. They are confident they can share any concerns or worries they may have with a member of staff, and that the issue will be swiftly sorted out. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe, including how to deal with the risks they may face in the use of the internet.

Inspection findings

- You and your leadership team have evaluated the school's current position accurately and honestly. You know clearly where the strengths lie. You carry out monitoring of teaching and learning, together with detailed data analysis for each pupil, to accurately identify and address areas for improvement. You have devised a detailed plan of action to achieve these goals and you set measurable targets that can be evaluated against pupils' progress. Staff are supported well to develop their skills. They attend and lead training in their subject areas.

- You agree that there remains work to be done in raising the level of challenge for the most able, to increase the proportion of pupils working at greater depth. Together with your leadership team, you have identified pupils' use of grammar, punctuation and spelling in their writing as a key area for improvement on the school development plan. Leaders have a clear vision and drive to bring about the improvements needed.
- Governors are highly supportive of the school. They are proactive and forward-looking in their approach to the hard federation arrangements. They visit classrooms and meet with different subject leaders. Governors have improved their understanding of the school's performance because they have received training on analysing and interpreting data. They work in close collaboration with staff and have built good relationships.
- Pupils' are given time to write for sustained periods in their English lessons and in other subjects. For example, pupils in the key stage 1 class had produced written work of a good standard about cliffs turning to sand in science. In the key stage 2 class, pupils had written extended pieces of writing about endangered animals. Work in pupils' books shows that pupils are taught to use different genres and styles of writing, for example diary extracts, fact files, viewpoints and recounts. Pupils are able to identify key features of texts. Written work is displayed around the school to celebrate the children becoming authors. However, you have recognised that accurate grammar, spelling and punctuation are not used consistently in their writing, and that repeated errors and misconceptions are not always picked up and addressed by teachers. Some pupils also need to ensure that they write in a neat handwriting style.
- You have a very detailed tracking system which looks at the progress and attainment of every pupil in depth. In some year groups, you have a high proportion of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. You run a very inclusive school. You analyse the performance of individuals and set next steps for them to make progress. This includes the achievement of the most able pupils in the school. The most able pupils make good progress as they move through the school. You are rightly focusing on improving the level of challenge presented to these pupils. Occasionally, pupils start with activities which are too easy and they are not moved on quickly enough in their learning. This restricts the progress they make and prevents some working at greater depth.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that teaching:

- develops pupils' grammar, punctuation and spelling skills in order to accelerate and improve their writing further
- ensures that pupils develop a neat handwriting style
- consistently challenges the most able pupils to ensure that they reach the highest levels.

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

Yours sincerely

Sarah Somers
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, the lead teacher, five governors and a representative from the local authority. I observed pupils' learning in lessons and looked at examples of pupils' work. I met with a group of pupils and spoke with other pupils during lessons. I scrutinised a variety of documents including the school development plan, the school's own evaluation of its performance and records of checks made on the suitability of staff to work with children. I took account of responses to Parent View from 14 parents and carers.