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14 December 2017

Miss Stephanie Peters
Executive Headteacher
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Dear Miss Peters

Short inspection of Harlescott Junior School

Following my visit to the school on 16 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 July 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school
since the last inspection.

Since your appointment in January 2017 as executive headteacher of the newly
formed Haughmond Federation, you have formed an effective partnership with the
head of school and both of you have a common vision of your next steps. You have
also ensured that through clear communication and well-organised systems there is
an effective leadership team, with leaders who have well defined roles and
responsibilities.

All leaders, including governors, have a clear passion and desire for the school to
continue to improve. Pupils are happy here and some Year 6 pupils said that they
did not want to leave at the end of the year. The majority of parents also praised
the school and one said it is 'a caring school where my two children feel safe and
secure and enjoy their learning; definitely a good choice of school when I moved
here'.

Pupils are friendly and courteous and display behaviours modelled and expected by
staff. When we walked around the school together, pupils were seen to be orderly
and calm. During wet play, pupils were well behaved, and some monitors were
responsible for handling money while running a tuck shop that was unsupervised by
adults. Pupils also gave examples of other responsibilities that they undertook, such
as being school council members, librarians and playtime buddies.

You have taken successful action to tackle areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. Effective monitoring of teaching and learning and careful planning of the curriculum have ensured that there are more opportunities for pupils to practise and build their writing skills. As a consequence, a review of books showed that a good standard of writing is evident in a range of subjects. Your monitoring documentation and our walk around school also demonstrated that staff training and robust monitoring have continued to improve the quality of teaching. There is, however, further room for improvement to speed up the progress of the most able pupils.

Leaders' self-evaluation is very accurate and you have identified the correct improvement areas to focus on as a result of your effective monitoring. For example, you use observations of teaching to identify needed improvements in the skills of teachers and then return at a later date to ensure that these, and other areas of development, have been implemented effectively. The overwhelming majority of staff in the staff survey felt they had been well supported and that the school had moved forward since its last inspection in 2013. Your plans for improvement are clear but could be sharper.

Pupils could recall the school value, 'Believe Together to Achieve Together' and recount what it meant to them. Leaders ensure that values are displayed around the school and are changed regularly to reflect the monthly plan. You recognise pupils' achievements through the use of weekly boards for the best achievers and a monthly display that shares your 'values champions'. You support the well-being of pupils effectively, as shown by the training of staff in a wide range of initiatives. For example, learning mentors run schemes such as 'Build to Express' and 'No Worries' in order to enable pupils to share concerns.

Governors have a passionate desire to represent the local community effectively. Governors are aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the school performance, but acknowledged that since the federation, they needed to develop their role of 'critical friend' further. Some information that is shared with governors is not detailed enough to enable them to review the area in depth. For example, attendance data shared with governors does not include information for different groups in addition to the overall attendance figure, and so governors are not fully aware that the attendance of some groups needs attention. Governors have undertaken safeguarding training and they had an opportunity to attend a session on safer recruitment. Link governors meet with specified subject leaders to develop their knowledge of the school.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. The school's single central record is compliant and relevant documentation is meticulously organised. The local authority safeguarding adviser checks safeguarding procedures and leaders also review their practice through an audit. Leaders act upon any areas identified, as a result of these checks, promptly.

The electronic system for maintaining and monitoring safeguarding records is comprehensive and ensures that leaders have a robust understanding and overview of pupils' safety and needs.

Pupils feel safe and say there are adults they can go to if they feel sad or worried. Effective activities organised during anti-bullying week ensured that pupils could verbalise what bullying is and what their responsibilities were if they were to witness an incident. Pupils who were spoken to agreed that if bullying did occur they were confident that staff would help them solve the problem. Pupils know about e-safety and how to keep safe online.

Inspection findings

- There is a respectful and positive learning climate throughout the school. The school building is spacious and it is an orderly, calm and purposeful place in which to learn. As a result of adult expectations, there is a clear focus by pupils on learning in the vast majority of classrooms. Behaviour reward systems encourage pupils to behave well, and pupils could identify how an accumulation of merits resulted in different rewards. This has had a positive impact as older pupils were seen gleefully and enthusiastically adding merits to the electronic behaviour monitoring software. Any incidents of poor behaviour are tracked carefully and pupils are supported well through the use of learning mentors. Numerous parents commented on the support available and one said, 'This school has a strong learning mentor team who are always available to support both children and parents through difficult times.'

- You work closely with local agencies and the local authority to ensure that pupils receive appropriate support. As a result of this close liaison, you have a number of pupils who are partly educated in your school and at the local authority behavioural support service centre. You are proud of being an inclusive school and are working hard to continue to reduce exclusions and continue to strengthen good behaviour.

- One of the key strengths of the leadership team is your accurate self-evaluation. Action plans reflect this evaluation and demonstrate that you and your leaders are working on the correct areas. You have implemented numerous appropriate actions in order to tackle your identified areas of development. However, your action plans do not have specific measurable outcomes that will enable you or governors to identify how successful you have been.

- The 2017 assessment information showed that pupils are generally in line with national outcomes but you are aware that some groups of pupils remain inconsistent in their outcomes. For example, progress for boys in reading and mathematics was better than for girls. Current school assessment information showed that in the vast majority of classes this inconsistency has been addressed through careful monitoring of group performance, and resulting interventions where needed. Leaders were aware of the classes that required further intervention and your thorough assessment system enables year group leaders to work with teachers to identify pupils who need further support. You and your

head of school then monitor to ensure that this has worked effectively through pupil progress meetings.

- Another group that you are focusing on in school is that of the most able, in order to increase their progress throughout the school. In previous years, not enough of the most able pupils have attained the higher standard at the end of Year 6. Your response has been to develop staff knowledge through effective training; precise monitoring, focusing on the most able; and utilising outside expertise (for example, the local authority mathematics hub). As a result, pupils were working on a range of tasks that were well planned to meet their needs in the vast majority of classrooms. However, a review of books verified leaders' self-evaluation that teachers do not always move pupils on to harder tasks quickly enough when pupils have demonstrated they have achieved a skill.

- We briefly discussed the performance of lower-ability pupils in writing. Current assessment information and practice seen in classrooms showed that they were being well supported and making progress from their starting points.

- Leaders have introduced a number of initiatives to improve attendance, including updates on newsletters and an 'attendance bear' for the highest performing class. Leaders also issue letters for late arrival. As a result of leaders' actions, current attendance has improved overall. Attendance for some groups such as girls has also improved. Leaders acknowledge that rates of attendance of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities still require further improvement and a reduction in persistent absence.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the most able pupils have the opportunity to attain higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics, as a result of more prompt identification of when they are ready to work on more difficult tasks

- improvement plans have clear timescales and measurable outcomes, thereby enabling governors to have more detailed information to develop their challenge to leaders

- attendance improves and persistent absence reduces, so that attendance for all groups of pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, is in line with national rates.

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

Yours sincerely

Mark Cadwallader
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, your head of school, senior leaders and teaching staff. I also met with three governors and one local authority adviser. I undertook two walks around the school with you and/or the head of the school. We visited all classrooms, spoke to pupils and looked at pupils' work in books.
By the end of the inspection, there were 16 recent responses on Parent View and 12 free-text responses. There were 21 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and 42 responses to the pupil questionnaire. I took account of these responses and talked with pupils formally in a group and informally individually. I also spoke to 13 parents as they arrived at school.

I looked at a number of documents, including: pupils' progress information; the school's own evaluation of its performance; improvement plans; information about the work of the governing body; records of checks on the quality of teaching and learning; and several school policy documents. I observed pupils' behaviour around school and I asked staff about the training they receive to help keep pupils safe. I scrutinised the school's safeguarding procedures and checks on staff employed in the school. I checked the school website. I also analysed the range of views expressed by staff through Ofsted's questionnaire about the school and its leadership.