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Mrs Linda Wall
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Dear Mrs Wall

Short inspection of Callowell Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 11 January 2018, 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 2013.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

You and your team provide a safe and inclusive learning environment for pupils. Pupils are well mannered and polite. Parents and carers agree. Without exception, every parent who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, would recommend the school.

At the previous inspection, you were asked to ensure that the teaching of mathematics was consistently good across key stage 2. Your work in this regard is only partially effective. Standards reached by Year 6 pupils in mathematics have risen swiftly in recent years. The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standards at the end of key stage 2 in writing and mathematics has been above the national average for the last two years. Pupils' progress in mathematics was considerably above the national average in 2017. However, while pupils' outcomes are high at the end of key stage 2, pupils' achievement in mathematics in some year groups is too inconsistent.

You were also asked to improve pupils' progress in writing across key stage 1. This work is largely effective. At key stage 1, pupils achieve standards in line with national averages overall. However, at times, teaching does not consistently challenge the most able pupils.

You were also asked to sharpen the school's improvement plans so that they are measured precisely against pupils' outcomes. Together with subject leaders, you have put action plans in place that focus on the right aspects for improvement. However, this remains work in progress because the plans do not make clear reference to how the school's actions will be measured against what pupils achieve.

There have been a number of changes in staffing and to the governing body since the previous inspection. In recent weeks, leaders, including governors, have been becoming more focused on remedying the remaining relative weaknesses in the school's performance. Governors are developing greater challenge in holding leaders to account for the school's performance.

You and staff have ensured that the proportion of children reaching a good level of development, the standard expected at the end of early years, has been at least in line with the national average for the last three years.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have responded quickly to the actions identified in the local authority's recent safeguarding audit. As a result, staff training is now up to date and in line with current legislation. Staff I spoke to on inspection apply their training confidently so that pupils' risk of harm is minimised. Staff talked confidently about how to refer concerns should they consider a child to be at risk. The school's curriculum supports pupils well to understand how to keep safe in and out of school and online. Every parent who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, agreed that their child is safe and well looked after at Callowell. Leaders and governors have ensured that safeguarding arrangements in the pre-school are fit for purpose and that appropriate ratios are adhered to.

However, leaders have not been timely in carrying out some routine health and safety checks. The governing body is beginning to provide greater oversight so that governors can assure themselves that appropriate measures are in place to minimise potential risks.

Inspection findings

- I examined the impact of leaders' actions to improve reading across the school. This is because, while pupils' outcomes at the end of key stage 1 are in line with national averages overall, in the last two years, some previously lower-attaining pupils have not caught up. In addition, in 2017 pupils' achievement in reading at the end of key stage 2 was below the national average.
- Leaders have ensured that pupils' reading material has been replenished. Pupils are very positive about the new books. Low-attaining pupils also receive regular intervention in reading and phonics to fill gaps in their knowledge and understanding. However, leaders have been slow to respond to the need to improve the teaching of reading across the school. While some action has been taken, leaders' checks on the teaching of reading have not been precise enough.

As a result, teaching is too inconsistent. In some classes, there is a precise focus on developing pupils' comprehension skills and understanding of what they read. In other classes, these skills are not addressed sufficiently. Leaders have not picked up or tackled these aspects quickly enough. This means that too few pupils across the school receive work that challenges them. Some previously lower-attaining pupils are not catching up rapidly.

- Another aspect I looked at was the attendance of pupils, including those pupils who are eligible for additional funding. This is because some disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities have not attended well enough in the past.
- Pupils' attendance declined in 2016 and 2017. You monitor the attendance of pupils when their attendance is very low. However, the attendance of a number of pupils who are persistently absent goes unchecked. This is not followed up by governors because they do not receive all the information they need. Consequently, pupils' attendance remains below the national average. Persistent absence remains high and shows little sign of improvement. Your actions are not bringing about the improvements required to ensure that pupils' attendance is good enough. This has a negative impact on the progress these pupils make.
- I also looked at how effectively leaders are working alongside governors to bring about improvements to leadership, teaching and pupils' outcomes. This is because, while pupils' outcomes overall are generally in line with the national average, the achievement of specific groups of pupils over time has been variable across a range of subjects. In recent months, the local authority has provided a range of useful support, which has helped to identify weaknesses accurately and put plans in place to address them.
- The new chair of the governing body was proactive in commissioning an external review of the work of the governing body last term. Governors are hands on and are responding swiftly to the actions that were identified by the local authority. Their visits to the school to review the impact of school improvement work are beginning to pay off. However, this way of working is very recent.
- While governors are working on the right aspects, there has not yet been enough time to see the impact of their work. Governors have been successful in holding leaders to account for the school's performance through the new system to track pupils' performance and progress. The information they now have is accurate and is helping them to have more detailed conversations with leaders about the progress of groups of pupils across the school.
- Published information about pupils' performance shows that leaders have been successful in raising achievement in mathematics and writing at the end of key stage 2. However, pupils' progress is too inconsistent in some classes across the school. Leaders' checks on teaching and learning are not precise enough. They do not take account of pupils' progress from their starting points in the school. In some classes, pupils do not receive work that is closely matched to their needs. As a result, their progress falters. In particular, the middle-attaining and most-able pupils' progress is too variable.
- Subject leaders have put precise action plans into place. These plans focus on the right aspects for improvement. However, some of this work is only just

beginning. The pace of improvement and impact of subject leaders' work are too variable. Therefore, it is too early to see the impact of their actions this term.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the teaching of reading across the school ensures that previously low-attaining pupils catch up rapidly
- the teaching of reading provides sufficient experience of all aspects of the curriculum so that pupils can use and apply their reading skills well and have a firm understanding of what they read
- teaching is sufficiently challenging for the middle-attaining and most-able pupils so that inconsistencies are minimised and pupils achieve the rates of progress of which they are capable in writing and mathematics
- leadership systems to track pupils' attendance are robust and checked and followed up by governors so that pupils' attendance is consistently good
- governors firmly hold senior and middle leaders to account for ensuring that checks on teaching and learning take into account pupils' starting points so that pupils' progress can be evaluated accurately.

I am copying this letter to the chair 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

Julie Carrington
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I spoke with you, other school leaders and a group of governors. I held two telephone conversations with your school improvement adviser from Gloucestershire local authority. We made visits to lessons to observe pupils' learning and to scrutinise their work. I looked at pupils' workbooks in detail and listened to pupils read. I also talked to pupils in lessons and listened to their views of the school.

I considered a range of documentary evidence, which included the school's self-evaluation, development plans and school performance information. I also looked at monitoring records for teaching, learning and assessment, your analysis of pupils' attendance and behaviour and safeguarding documentation.

In addition, I took account of 23 responses to the Parent View online survey and

the free-text messaging service. I gathered the views of staff through an online questionnaire and through discussions during the inspection.