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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
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Mrs Slocombe
Headteacher
Radstock Primary School
Radstock Lane
Earley
Reading
Berkshire
RG6 5UZ

Dear Mrs Slocombe

Short inspection of Radstock Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 6 February 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 December 2012.

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 joined the school as headteacher in April 2017 following the retirement of the previous headteacher. The deputy headteacher joined the school in September 2016 and a new chair of governors has recently been appointed. Upon appointment, you and your deputy headteacher reviewed the quality of education and identified aspects of the school's work that need to be improved. You worked with advisers from the local authority to establish strengths of the school and have set clear goals for improvement. You recognise that the quality of teaching is not strong across the school and that standards in some subjects, particularly writing, are not high enough. You have provided clear information to governors so that they have a clear picture of what needs to be done.

You have trained staff and introduced a coaching and mentoring system that is helping teachers to improve their skills. Staff have welcomed this approach and this is reflected in the comment made by one member of staff who wrote: 'I have particularly appreciated the opportunity to work with other schools. This has allowed us to recognise and implement good practice across the school as well as making a positive impact, especially in English.' However, you are not complacent and know that more needs to be done to bring about teaching that is of a consistently high standard.

Since joining the school, you have established a set of core values that underpin the climate for learning. You have raised teachers' expectations of what pupils should aspire to achieve. You have provided governors with a clear picture of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and you have shared with them the actions that you have put into place to improve the quality of education. You have quickly established good working relationships with staff, governors, parents and carers. You are ambitious for pupils and staff and are very well placed to lead the school's journey to improvement.

Pupils have very positive attitudes to school. They enjoy coming to school and they say there is very little they would like to change. They get on very well together and they value the opportunity that they have to work and play alongside those from different ethnic and religious backgrounds to themselves. Pupils say that discrimination on any grounds is not tolerated and that all pupils are treated equally and fairly. They like their teachers and they say that staff act rapidly should they have a concern. Pupils understand the school's values and know how these help them to become better learners and better members of their school community. This is reflected in their behaviour in classrooms and around the school. Pupils are very polite, friendly and helpful to each other, to staff and to visitors.

Leaders have put into place actions to address the issues for improvement identified at the previous inspection. They have introduced a new programme to teach mathematics and this is already showing rewards. However, leaders know that the quality of teaching remains too variable and that it is not securely good across the school. You also know that rapid improvements need to be made to raise standards in writing. You are aware that some groups of pupils, including boys and White British pupils have not achieved equally well as other pupils and you are taking action to address this issue.

Safeguarding is effective.

The school's procedures to keep pupils safe are effective. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Leaders and governors make rigorous checks on the suitability of all staff to work with pupils. All adults who visit the school are carefully checked and staff have been trained to challenge those adults who do not display identification when visiting the school. There are four designated safeguarding lead officers who have had recent training and so there is always someone on site that staff may approach if they have a concern that a pupil may be at risk from harm. The school's child protection policy provides staff with clear guidance as well as a list of personnel to contact at any time. All staff and governors receive annual safeguarding training as well as regular updates so that they are fully aware of current issues.

Pupils say that they feel safe in school. They say that all adults listen to them and take their concerns seriously. They know about different forms of bullying, including that relating to modern technology. However, pupils are adamant that instances of bullying are rare. School records show few reported incidents of bullying. Pupils are taught to stay safe through the personal, social and health education curriculum as

well as through themed assemblies. Parents, pupils, staff and governors agree or strongly agree that pupils are happy and safe in school. One parent wrote: 'My child feels safe and enjoys learning at Radstock.'

Inspection findings

- In addition to evaluating the effectiveness of the school's arrangements for safeguarding, we agreed to evaluate:
 - how effectively the quality of teaching meets the needs of all pupils, including those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities
 - the extent to which all pupils progress as well as they should, particularly in writing
 - the effectiveness of actions taken by leaders at all levels to sustain a good quality of education since the previous inspection.
- School leaders have accurately identified that the quality of teaching is not consistently strong across the school. During our visits to classrooms, we found that there are times when teachers do not plan work that is at the right level for all pupils. This means that the most able pupils are not challenged and so do not reach the higher standards of which they are capable. There are times when pupils have to repeat what they already know and are not moved on quickly enough and this slows their progress. Work in pupils' books shows that in some cases, pupils in Year 4 have more challenging work than in Year 5, reflecting the higher expectations of teachers in that part of the school.
- Where the best learning was seen, pupils were provided with a high level of challenge. Teachers asked questions that made pupils think and work hard. Independent learning activities were matched to pupils' learning needs, enabling all groups of pupils to progress well. In these classes, pupils were provided with resources and high-quality support and this increased their pace of learning.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are provided with good support by trained teaching assistants. These assistants help pupils in class by breaking learning down into smaller steps so that pupils understand what they are to do. Occasionally pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are provided with additional programmes of work to help them to overcome their specific difficulties and so they progress well.
- Although pupils in school reach standards that are above average at the end of Year 6, they do not all make the progress that they should in writing. Children in Reception get off to a good start in learning to write. They use their phonic skills to write simple words and phrases and the most able are proud of the short stories that they write. These early skills are built on in Year 1 but progress slows in Year 2. Work in pupils' books shows that they make variable progress in writing across key stage 2. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 show a sound grasp of basic skills and their extended writing shows fluency and good use of language to express ideas. However, writing by pupils currently in Years 5 and 6 is not as well developed, due to a legacy of underachievement.

- Although pupils attain well in the English spelling, punctuation and grammar test at the end of Year 6, they do not routinely use these skills when they write. The leader for English has introduced more 'boy-friendly' topics and there are now specific links between reading and writing. However, these have not yet been effective in raising standards in writing. This is because variations in the quality of outcomes in different year groups have not been picked up on and addressed.
- The previous inspection identified the need to accelerate pupils' progress in mathematics. In order to do this, the headteacher introduced a new programme to support teaching in mathematics and this is bringing about improvements to the way in which the subject is taught. Work in pupils' books shows that pupils gain a good understanding of number and confidently use this to solve written word problems. Teachers provide pupils with practical resources and equipment that help pupils to better understand what they are learning. Pupils have opportunities to respond to teachers' questions that ask them to explain their thinking and this enables pupils to make better progress than previously.
- Team leaders, including the English leader, have received training to help them to improve their skills and this has helped them to raise teachers' expectations of what pupils should achieve. Until recently, they did not use performance information to help them to evaluate where weaknesses in their subject lay. While there have been improvements in provision and outcomes in mathematics, progress in writing has been slower.
- The newly formed senior leadership team has gained a clear view of where improvements need to be made. They carried out a thorough analysis of all available information and they spent time in classrooms to see how well pupils were taught. This information is shared with governors so that governors now have a realistic understanding of the school's performance. There are strong working relationships between school leaders and governors and they are well placed to secure further improvement.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the quality of teaching is consistently good across the school and that all pupils make consistently good progress in writing
- middle leaders make effective use of all performance information to establish the strengths and areas for development in their subject.

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

Yours sincerely

Joy Considine
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I observed pupils working across the school during a learning walk that I undertook jointly with you. I met with school leaders and with four members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. I also held a meeting with an adviser from the local authority. I met with pupils formally as well as informally and I looked at work in their books. Among the documents I scrutinised were school development plans and information relating to pupils' learning and progress. I also examined the effectiveness of the school's arrangements to safeguard pupils. I took into account the views of parents by analysing the 105 responses to the online survey, Parent view, and considering the 83 responses to the free-text survey. I also spoke informally to parents in the playground at the start of the inspection. I considered the views of staff by analysing the 46 responses to the staff survey.