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Dear Mr Leonard

Short inspection of Cotteridge Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 13 March 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 July 2014.

This school continues to be good.

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

Since you became headteacher in April 2016, you have been determined to further improve and develop the school. You have high aspirations for each child. You take effective action to ensure that pupils achieve well and reach very high standards across the curriculum. Parents and carers spoke of the many changes that you have brought about, saying that they are all for the good of the whole school. Your vision – 'Achieving Excellence, Inspiring Dreams' – is shared by the whole school community. It drives all that you do. You lead the school exceptionally well.

Changes in staffing since the last inspection have resulted in strong leadership at all levels. You have created a highly effective senior and middle leadership team. Leaders are keen to make a difference. They use every opportunity to ensure that pupils are getting the best provision. Roles and responsibilities are clear; you support and challenge one another very well. You also support other schools looking to develop and improve aspects of their own performance. You all have an accurate view of the school. This is gathered through regular, rigorous monitoring of teaching, learning and pupils' personal development. You welcome scrutiny from a range of external partners and use their feedback effectively.

Your long-term development plan is detailed and focused. It identifies clear priorities for further improvement in order to achieve excellence. You are

determined to boost the progress of disadvantaged pupils even further so that they can reach the highest standards. You continue to build on the improvements made in the early years so that all pupils get the best possible start to school. You demonstrate resolve and tenacity, ensuring that every child can make progress no matter how small their steps.

You focus on making sure that teaching across the school is of the highest quality. This was an area for improvement at the last inspection. You ensure that all staff have access to high-quality training. This is part of the 'Cotteridge offer', which provides access to professional development for all staff. Teachers and non-teaching staff who spoke to the inspectors value the development opportunities they receive. They display a strong commitment to professional development. The training offered links closely to school development priorities as well as to individual staff needs. Teachers work together in threes to reflect on and review their practice. Outstanding practice that exists in the school is routinely shared. Teachers develop strong subject knowledge, which enables them to enthuse and challenge all pupils in their learning. They further develop their craft as a teacher. As a result, teaching across the school has improved since the last inspection.

The learning environment reflects the broad, balanced curriculum you insist is every child's entitlement. You provide rich learning opportunities for all pupils. Pupils talk enthusiastically about studying subjects such as science, geography and art. The reading spine you have introduced ensures exposure to a variety of quality novels and texts which pupils enjoy studying. These texts both challenge and interest them. The wide range of after-school clubs and opportunities for enrichment, such as art weeks and the 'Big ideas club', further enhance the curriculum offered. High-quality pupils' work is celebrated and displayed as a model for all to follow. There is an exciting buzz of learning across the school. As a result, pupils are making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. An increasing number are exceeding national expectations and working at greater depth.

Governors value your openness and honesty. They fully support the drive for excellence. They have a wide range of experience and extensive skills to draw upon. Governors make the most of every opportunity to visit the school and work with leaders. They check things out for themselves and understand their statutory responsibilities. As a result, they support and challenge effectively.

Pupils are well behaved, polite and want to learn. They cooperate and get on well with each other. They have well-formed views and opinions but are also able to listen carefully to one another. They show tolerance and respect to all. You reviewed the behaviour policy, listening to the views of pupils, parents and staff. A new system is now in place across the school. The 'zone board' is understood by all pupils and applied consistently by adults. Pupils are keen to get a golden postcard sent home to their parents. The school is a calm, welcoming place to be.

Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. 80 parents responded to Parent View, the Ofsted online questionnaire, with 100% saying that they would recommend the school. Many described the school as a fantastic place to be, with

dedicated, professional and friendly staff. All parents who spoke to the inspector said that their child was happy and safe at school. Many commented on the wide range of opportunities you provide for their children which make learning interesting and enjoyable. They recognise the positive changes being made across the school and appreciate being equal partners in their child's learning. Two comments summed up the views of many parents: 'The school feels like it has moved on in the last couple of years with a new vision and renewed engagement with parents,' and 'We struck gold when our child was offered a place here.'

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose.

The strong culture of safeguarding is underpinned by a calm but tenacious approach to any concern about a child. The well-being and welfare of every child are at the heart of your school. The designated safeguarding leads work closely together. They have extensive knowledge of how to keep children safe. The pastoral manager engenders trust from parents and helps them to access appropriate external support. Parents say that the pastoral support is invaluable.

Leaders have ensured that robust systems and procedures are in place. Staff know their pupils well and are extremely vigilant. Highly effective recording systems now ensure that a comprehensive picture of each child is built up. This ensures that timely action is taken and vulnerable children and their families receive help when they need it. Governors have a very good understanding of their responsibilities to keep children safe. They draw on their extensive experience and knowledge to support the school.

Pupils have a well-developed understanding of how to keep themselves safe. Through regular opportunities across the curriculum, they learn how to stay safe when using the internet and about what to do if a stranger approaches them. Younger pupils talked about crossing the road safely and what to do in the event of a fire. Pupils know that bullying in any form is not acceptable in or out of school. They have confidence in the adults at school to help them sort out any problem or worry they may have.

Inspection findings

- My first area of focus was to look at provision in the early years. The proportion of pupils who reached a good level of development fell at the end of 2017. Leaders quickly took action to analyse the reasons for the dip in outcomes and address this issue.
- Working with an external consultant, the provision in the early years has been transformed. The learning environment now enables children to become successful, independent learners. They can access a range of high-quality equipment and resources to initiate their own learning. Relationships are very positive. Children work happily and confidently together in small groups. For example, Reception children listen carefully to each other when trying to order a

set of picture cards. They relate well to the adults supporting them. The focus on developing children's language and vocabulary is evident throughout. Adults encourage children to share their thoughts and ideas. Children's writing books show the strong progress they are currently making.

- The leadership of the early years has been strengthened since the last inspection. Regular monitoring and evaluation of the impact of the actions taken helps identify the next steps for further development. Planning for learning now underpins high-quality focused teaching sessions. All adults have high expectations of what children can achieve. For example, Nursery children were encouraged to write their name on the monitor board when they had been chosen to be the fruit or milk monitor. Specific reading, writing, phonics and mathematics sessions take place regularly. These help children develop the skills they need for key stage 1. Current school assessment data shows that outcomes have already risen so that they are higher than those achieved last year, although gaps still remain between outcomes for boys and girls.
- Another area of focus was to look at how effectively leaders are ensuring that disadvantaged pupils are making good progress. Disadvantaged pupils achieve well at expected levels but fewer achieve greater depth or the higher standards at the end of key stages 1 and 2. There is also a gap between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils in the school. Leaders say that they have a 'healthy obsession' with this group of pupils; they are passionate about helping them succeed at the highest levels. Senior leaders each take on a role of Pupil Premium champion. They keep a watchful eye on key groups of pupils and monitor their progress carefully. Robust assessment procedures ensure that teachers know what pupils can do and what they need to do next. Champions liaise with teachers and support staff. They ensure that timely and appropriate support is put in place when a pupil is at risk of underachieving. Additional adults provide effective support and challenge. As a result, the majority of disadvantaged pupils achieve well across the school.
- A particular focus was disadvantaged pupils' progress in reading and writing. In 2017, they made less progress in these areas than other pupils by the end of key stage 2. The majority of disadvantaged pupils can read but many struggle to understand what they are reading. Leaders have introduced a new approach to the teaching of reading this year. All staff have accessed training in how to teach reading. Inference, deduction and reading response are now explicitly taught across the school. A focus on widening pupils' vocabulary is having a positive impact. Many pupils produce high-quality writing in response to the books they have read. Pupils' books show that they are beginning to express their ideas more clearly. They accurately include words they have studied, such as perilous, bewildering and mellifluous. They can extract key information from a text to back up their point of view. They use joined handwriting and work is presented to a very good standard. Teachers have high expectations and give effective feedback; they do not let minor errors slip by. Pupils act on the feedback to improve and edit their work. As a result, more pupils are reaching the higher standards in their reading and working at a greater depth in writing.
- Additional funding is used to provide appropriate support to disadvantaged pupils and their families. High-quality pastoral support ensures that pupils are ready to

learn. Support for speech and language is provided at the earliest opportunity. After-school clubs and visits provide a chance for pupils to gain first-hand experiences. These opportunities develop their skills, knowledge and understanding. Governors monitor and evaluate the use of additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils. They ensure that it is spent well and that pupils are making good progress as a result.

- Finally, we looked at how well pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are supported at school. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have SEN is higher than that found in most primary schools. Leaders have managed the absence of the current leader for SEN successfully. They have taken on shared responsibility for this group of pupils. Leaders work with a SEN coordinator from another school to develop their own knowledge and expertise. The headteacher stated: 'We have become better leaders as a result of managing this aspect of provision.'
- A carousel of support relevant to pupils' needs is in place and this support is targeted through the comprehensive 'assess, plan, do, review' cycle. Staff comment that this is more time-efficient and makes better use of the skills of additional adults than in the past. Leaders ensure that interventions are effective. Weekly monitoring and half-termly scrutiny of provision enable pupils' progress to be tracked carefully. Pupils receive support in the classroom where this is appropriate. The tasks they are set are usually adapted to enable them to make small steps of progress. However, sometimes pupils do not complete work accurately and this limits the progress they make.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the significant improvements made to the early years are further built upon so that outcomes continue to rise
- rates of progress continue to increase so that more pupils, especially those that are disadvantaged, reach the highest standards
- provision for and expectations of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities continue to be refined so that more pupils can achieve the levels of which they are capable.

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

Yours sincerely

Nicola Harwood
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

- I held discussions with you and other leaders about the key lines of enquiry for this inspection, the school's self-evaluation and plans for future improvement. We discussed information about pupils' current progress and attainment and talked about significant changes that have been made since the last inspection.
- I met with a group of six governors, including the chair and vice-chair. I also met with a group of teaching and non-teaching staff. I considered the 20 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- I carried out learning walks and visits to classrooms with your deputy headteacher to look at the impact of teaching and assessment on pupils' learning and progress. During these visits, I spoke with pupils, looked at their books and discussed their work with them. I looked at a range of writing books.
- I talked to a group of pupils to seek their views. I talked to pupils on the playground during their breaktime.
- I met with parents before school started and considered the 80 responses to Ofsted's Parent View website. I also considered the 74 free-text responses.
- I looked at a range of documents, including: minutes of governing body meetings; external review visit reports; and procedures for safeguarding and for checking the suitability of staff to work with pupils.
- I checked the school website.