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Mrs Marie Smith
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Smith

Short inspection of Etching Hill CofE (C) Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 7 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 November 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 the last inspection, governors have appointed more leaders to join the highly effective executive leadership team. You and the deputy headteachers are talented and skilled people. Your exceptional leadership has helped the school improve further. As a result, pupils' progress is strong across the curriculum.

Leaders have supported all staff to be an effective and hardworking team. Staff are proud of their school and want the very best for children. Leaders and governors have paid close attention to staff well-being. The Staff Well-Being Action Group (SWAG) monitors how staff feel and makes sure that there is a positive climate in the school. A large proportion of staff chose to respond to Ofsted's online questionnaire. Every respondent feels that leaders have created a climate in which teachers are trusted to take risks and innovate in ways that are right for the pupils. Governors rightly assert that this is a happy school.

Parents and carers are equally happy with the standard of education. Every parent who responded to Parent View feels that pupils are safe and make good progress. Many parents took the time to submit written responses to Ofsted. Comments included, 'I love the whole family feel of the school,' and, 'This school gives my child a chance to shine. The staff are full of enthusiasm and very approachable.'

Leaders' and governors' greatest strength lies in the quality of their self-evaluation. They have high expectations of what they want to achieve and a clear understanding of what needs to improve further. As a result, the school is securely good, and some aspects of practice are outstanding. However, leaders are clear that there is more that they want to do before they feel that the school's overall effectiveness is outstanding.

You have effectively supported other local schools. In partnership with the local authority, you and senior leaders have worked with a number of other schools over recent years to help them raise standards.

At the last inspection, leaders were asked to further raise the quality of teaching and learning, particularly in writing and mathematics. They were asked to do this by improving pupils' spelling, providing more opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical learning in different subjects and ensuring that the higher-attaining pupils are moved onto their tasks as quickly as possible.

A commitment to high-quality coaching, support and training for staff has improved the overall standard of teaching, learning and assessment. Teachers and support staff work with leaders and one another to improve what they do. They share their ideas, are involved in research projects and are encouraged to take risks. As a result, outcomes are improving across the school. Additional strategies have been devised to improve pupils' spelling. Teachers use the new national curriculum to ensure that expectations are high and age appropriate. It is evident from pupils' writing books that their spelling improves quickly throughout the year.

Leaders have adapted the curriculum to offer pupils greater opportunities to apply their mathematical skills. For example, in science and geography there are many examples of pupils interpreting data and using their mathematical skills to explore a range of topics. It is also evident from pupils' books, and observation of teaching, that pupils are frequently challenged. The proportion of pupils achieving at a higher standard in key stages 1 and 2 has increased in recent years and compares favourably to national levels.

Although Etching Hill is improving and has several key strengths, leaders acknowledge that there are some areas that can be developed even further. Key areas for improvement include ensuring that any differences between boys' and girls' achievement diminish further, providing pupils with even more opportunities to learn about other faiths and cultures, thereby further enhancing opportunities to develop tolerance and mutual respect, and embedding the developments in the approach to the teaching of reading.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding at Etching Hill, and arrangements are fit for purpose. Staff that I spoke to throughout the inspection are clear about their responsibilities. Pupils said that they feel safe and teachers help pupils understand what is right and what is wrong.

Some pupils work with governors to monitor the overall quality of health and safety in the school. This helps pupils understand the importance of many aspects of day-to-day procedures, such as the administration of first aid.

Child protection files evidence how leaders monitor safeguarding across the school. The school's designated safeguarding leads meet regularly to discuss the decisions that they make and review pupils' safety.

Inspection findings

- Etching Hill supports a number of children looked after. These pupils are well supported. Pupils' individual plans identify their strengths and the aspects of their learning or welfare that require further support. The school has devised special books for these children. These books provide a dedicated place for pupils to record their achievements and friendships. They help pupils explore the changes that they experience. The local authority's 'virtual school team', which is also responsible for the care and welfare of this group of children, identifies the school's work as exemplary.
- Although above national averages, the school's attendance figures have declined slightly over the last two years. Leaders monitor attendance carefully and involve external agencies if pupils miss too many sessions. As a result, overall rates of attendance improved sharply in the last term.
- Since the last inspection, governors are now responsible for the operation of pre-school and Nursery provision. The standard of teaching is of a high quality across the early years. During the inspection, two-year-olds were busy designing superhero capes. In the Reception Year, children were making rockets, exploring star constellations and painting planets. All early years provision is overseen by one of the school's deputy headteachers. This leader has an excellent understanding of provision and is a highly skilled practitioner.
- Pupils stated that it is 'OK' to be different at Etching Hill. They are proud of their school and their behaviour is superb. Although systems are in place for pupils to develop mutual respect for and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs, on occasion, some pupils struggle to recall what they have learned and why. Leaders have also identified this issue in their monitoring. There are plans in place to schedule more activities to support pupils' learning, for example visits to different places of worship, so that pupils have greater confidence and awareness of society's diversity.
- Governors are effective in their roles. They have a range of skills and robustly hold leaders to account for pupils' achievement. Like leaders, they place great importance on teamwork and fostering an ethos of collaboration. Minutes of their meetings demonstrate the high level of support and challenge that they offer leaders. They are very proud of the school and the standard of education it offers to the local community in Rugeley.
- Some performance information for disadvantaged pupils has been variable in recent years. Some of this variability is as a result of pupils' mobility. Information

must also be treated with caution, as the proportion of disadvantaged pupils is relatively small and one pupil can make a significant difference to data. Nonetheless, leaders and governors are committed to ensuring that disadvantaged pupils have the very best support.

- The progress of disadvantaged pupils is carefully tracked to ensure that any underachievement is quickly acted on. If staff identify any concerns, pupils receive a programme of 'Catch up to keep up' support. This additional teaching allows pupils to revisit learning or hear key messages before they are introduced at a whole-class level. As a result of this strategy and the school's wider work, any gaps in achievement are broadly diminishing over time.
- Outcomes in reading, including those for disadvantaged pupils, have shown some variability over time. In response, leaders have worked with staff to adapt teachers' planning and approaches to assessment. These changes are having a positive impact but have only been in place for 12 months. Leaders acknowledge that these improvements must be embedded further so that pupils' achievement is substantial and sustained.
- Leaders and governors have identified some minor gaps in achievement between boys and girls, particularly in reading and writing. Importantly, boys attain broadly in line with national averages. However, the school wants to ensure that, like the girls, boys make even better rates of progress. Work to improve boys' progress has been effective, but leaders are keen to explore how their research work can diminish any differences even further.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- any differences between boys' and girls' achievement diminish even further, particularly in literacy
- pupils are given even more opportunities to learn about different faiths and cultures
- the improvements to the teaching of reading are embedded further.

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

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Keay
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

At the start of the inspection, I met with the executive leadership team to discuss the school's self-evaluation and school development plan. During our discussions, we agreed several key lines of enquiry to ascertain whether the school remains good and safeguarding is effective.

I undertook a learning walk with you. We visited most year groups and took account of pupils' learning in books in several classes.

I scrutinised a range of school documentation including the single central record, child protection files, arrangements for children looked after, risk assessments, feedback from internal parental questionnaires and minutes of meetings for the governing body.

I took account of the following stakeholder feedback: 93 respondents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, 56 responses on free text and 27 responses to the staff survey. There were no responses to the pupil survey. I met with parents at the start of the day as pupils arrived at school.

I met with five members of the governing body, including the chair and vice-chair. I spoke to a representative from Staffordshire local authority via the telephone.