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Mrs Anne Wylie
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Wylie

Short inspection of Abberley Parochial VC Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 2 May 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 February 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. This is to the credit of you, other leaders and the governing body, who have worked with determination and continued to drive the school forward through significant changes in staffing over the past year. Leaders have supported new staff effectively, including those who are at the start of their careers, through appropriate training and the sharing of best practice. You and the leadership team understand the challenges and benefits of leading a small school. Parents and carers appreciate the close relationships that exist between the school and families. All staff who responded to the Ofsted survey said they were proud to be a member of the school.

The leadership team know the school well and lead it with a clear sense of purpose. The school has a strong sense of the values that underpin its work. Children, their well-being and their educational outcomes are at the heart of all the school does.

The previous inspection noted that there was a need to improve the accuracy of challenge for pupils within lessons. You and other leaders have focused hard on developing more accurate systems of assessment which enable teachers to understand pupils' learning needs. Alongside this, leaders have ensured a deeper focus on setting work that meets individual needs so that most pupils are challenged with work that is neither too hard nor too easy. The impact of this can be seen in the above average proportion of pupils who attained a high standard in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2 in 2017.

The previous inspection report also identified the need to improve the pace of learning

in lessons and to ensure that teachers get the opportunity to observe outstanding practice. You have ensured that the staff, including those who are new to the school, have regular opportunities to work with and observe the strongest practice in the school and other schools. Staff meet to discuss their practice and share judgements on pupils' work.

Governors are involved in a range of monitoring activities, including learning walks and discussions with pupils. You provide them with comprehensive information about the progress pupils make and how the school is meeting its improvement priorities. As a result, governors are knowledgeable about the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They carry out their roles well, providing effective challenge and support.

You have managed changes to staffing in September well and ensured that staff have received appropriate training and that the quality of teaching is maintained. You are aware of a few inconsistencies in teaching and learning and are addressing these.

Parents appreciate and value the support their children receive. All parents who spoke to me at the end of the day, and nearly all of those who commented online, were positive about all aspects of the school. A typical comment from parents was:

'Both my two children love going to this school. They continue to grow and develop, both academically and socially, with confidence, which is all due to the hard work and dedication of the school staff. For me, it is a great school.'

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders, including governors, ensure that pupils are safe and provide strong pastoral care. You have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Arrangements for checking that staff are suitable people to work with children meet requirements. Staff receive appropriate training, and regular updates ensure that they are well briefed about potential risks to the safety of pupils. As a result, they understand the actions they should take if they are concerned about a pupil's welfare.

All pupils say the school is a safe and happy place, where poor behaviour and bullying are rare. One pupil commented: 'Bullying rarely ever happens. Very occasionally we have a squabble with a friend, but that is expected with children but it is not bullying.' Pupils are confident that adults in the school will help them resolve any difficulties they may have. They are appreciative of the availability of a weekly session to talk to a member of staff if they have a concern.

The curriculum includes opportunities for pupils to learn about how to keep safe. Pupils comment that their school is a safe and happy place to be where they are looked after well. They know how to protect themselves when they use the internet and other electronic equipment, such as personal tablets and mobile phones. Older pupils are very proud of their roles on the e-safety committee. All parents who responded to the Parent View survey and those who spoke to me agreed that the school looks after pupils well, and that they are happy and feel safe.

Inspection findings

- You provide strong leadership, ably supported by the deputy headteacher and other leaders, and have an accurate and realistic understanding of the school's performance. You had already identified the key lines of enquiry for this inspection.
- One line of enquiry focused on evaluating pupils' progress in English grammar, punctuation and spelling (EGPS). In 2017, the proportion of pupils attaining the expected and higher standard in EGPS was below the national average. The average score for spelling was also below the national average in 2016 and 2017. On further analysis, you identified that EGPS was a focus area for the school and this is a priority on your school development plan. As a result, leaders implemented a series of actions to address this. Actions included staff training, setting EGPS expectations for each year group, putting in a clear approach to spelling sessions and carefully tracking pupils' progress. You are currently monitoring the impact of this. Staff have ensured that pupils write at length in a range of subjects, and work in pupils' books shows that pupils are taught to use different genres and styles of writing. You agree there are a few inconsistencies in teachers' expectations of pupils' application of spelling and punctuation. You continue to work on these areas.
- In the past three years, there has been a decline in the proportion of Year 1 pupils who passed the end-of-year phonics screening check. The numbers of pupils in these cohorts were small and you have given me clear evidence to explain the decline. However, you have not been complacent and have ensured that staff have had focused training in the teaching of phonics. This is already showing positive results, with a large majority of pupils making swift progress. During the inspection, I saw pupils applying their phonics knowledge well and systematically using phonics strategies to help them spell and decode unknown words. Current school assessment information for phonics shows that pupils in Year 1 are making good progress.
- Another line of enquiry focused on the progress in mathematics for middle-attaining pupils in key stage 2. It also focused on whether pupils in key stage 1 and the early years are making enough progress to attain the higher standards in mathematics. The mathematics leader has a clear understanding of strengths and priorities in mathematics and leads the subject well. She discussed with me the actions put in place to increase pupils' progress in mathematics. This has included a 'mastery' approach, where pupils develop a deep understanding of the mathematics curriculum.
- Good progress in mathematics for pupils across the school, including middle-attaining pupils, is evident in books. Pupils of all abilities regularly tackle challenging problems in mathematics lessons, including pupils in key stage 1. Most-able children in the early years have a range of opportunities to challenge them. For example, children were doubling and halving numbers beyond ten with confidence and were involved in adding and subtracting numbers to twenty. Children working in the number area during the inspection demonstrated good levels of concentration and independence. As a result, these children are making good progress in mathematics.
- Behaviour is a strength of the school and staff have high expectations of behaviour, which pupils adhere to. Pupils are very friendly, well-mannered, courteous and respectful. They behave very well in lessons, at playtimes and around the school.

Relationships across the school between adults and pupils and between pupils themselves are strong. Pupils are happy and enjoy school, and they attend school regularly.

- Pupils are very proud to take on additional responsibilities, such as their roles as house captains, members of the eco-committee and as playground leaders. Older pupils discussed their roles in decision making in the school, including their contribution to the school's self-evaluation of strengths and development areas.
- You make sure that, across the school, pupils follow a broad, balanced and engaging curriculum. It includes the requirements of the national curriculum and is adjusted to meet the needs and interests of the pupils. The curriculum is enriched through trips and clubs that broaden pupils' horizons and promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education effectively. This includes residential visits, which enhance pupils' learning, social skills and teamwork well. Pupils discussed with enthusiasm the opportunities to learn a musical instrument. For example, all of Year 3 and 4 have the opportunity to play the ukulele. Pupils and parents enjoyed the Eisteddfod, which involved pupils, parents and the community. Pupils, including the youngest children, had the opportunity to perform in public.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teaching is developed further to secure a greater consistency of approach
- the successful strategies to develop pupils' English grammar, punctuation and spelling skills are further embedded
- all pupils have the knowledge and skills to be able to spell words accurately and all staff pick up swiftly on repeated spelling and punctuation errors.

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

Yours sincerely

Sarah Somers
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, the deputy headteacher, the mathematics leader and one governor, and I had a telephone conversation with the chair of governors. I also had a telephone conversation with the director of education for the Diocese of Worcester. I observed pupils' learning in lessons and looked at examples of pupils' work. I met with a group of pupils and spoke with

other pupils during lessons. I scrutinised a variety of documents, including information relating to safeguarding, the school's development plan, the school's own evaluation of its performance and records of checks made on the suitability of staff to work with children. I took account of the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire from 23 parents and carers. I also spoke to parents at the end of the school day. I considered the responses to Ofsted's staff survey.