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Mrs Diana Atkinson
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Dear Mrs Atkinson

Short inspection of Lea CofE Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 3 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 March 2014.

This school continues to be good.

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

You and the head of school were newly appointed to the school in September 2016. You make a good team and are ambitious for the school. In the autumn term of 2016, you quickly identified that the quality of teaching was not strong enough. You have put in place a range of successful strategies to improve the school. A strong sense of teamwork among staff has made a positive contribution to recent development.

Lea CofE Primary School is a happy and vibrant place for pupils to learn and grow. A sense of community pervades the school. The level of care and guidance from staff, coupled with a broad range of enrichment activities, contributes well to pupils' personal development. Pupils shared with great enthusiasm how they enjoy going on different trips and taking part in the varied extra-curricular clubs. They particularly enjoy the drama, music and sport clubs, as well as taking part in competitive sport against other schools. Learning about a range of faiths and cultures has a positive impact on pupils' spiritual and cultural understanding.

The quality of teaching has improved over the last two years and attainment is gradually rising. During that time, several new teachers have started at the school. You have put in place regular training for all staff, which has had a positive impact on their subject knowledge. Staff have adapted well to the changes that have been put in place for assessment and curriculum planning. As a result, work is more

suitably matched to pupils' needs. Teachers make learning lively and interesting. A typical example of this was seen during the inspection in a key stage 2 English lesson. The teacher brought the text to life and put on a costume to play a character. Pupils asked searching questions to deepen their understanding of the character and the text. The areas for improvement outlined in the previous inspection report have been addressed appropriately. A range of new teaching strategies have been embedded in mathematics, particularly for the development of pupils' reasoning skills.

You have implemented a range of successful leadership processes in order to evaluate the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. A substantial part of this has been the development of a new assessment system to track pupils' progress. Teachers' assessments are now more reliable and you carry out regular meetings to check how well pupils are progressing. Pupils who have particular gaps in their learning are identified and given effective additional support. The impact of this additional support is evaluated at an individual pupil level. However, you do not gather this information together and evaluate the overall impact of interventions. As a result, you do not have a strategic oversight of which strategies are proving most or least successful. This is particularly the case for weaker readers and for disadvantaged pupils. Greater precision here will enable you to focus resources in the areas that will have the most impact on pupils' progress.

Middle leadership is being developed effectively. The mathematics and English leaders are enthusiastic and have a clear impact in their roles. They benefit from sharing practice and collaborating with other middle leaders in the local cluster of schools. The physical education (PE) and sport premium is managed well. A range of additional activities for sport and PE have raised participation rates.

The quality of provision in the early years is a clear example of recent improvement. In 2017 at the end of Reception, the proportion of children who reached a good level of development rose and was above the national average. In previous years, this figure was much lower. Children in the pre-school get off to a good start. Consequently, more pupils are entering Reception with skills and understanding that are typical for their age. Teaching in Reception is good. During the inspection, children were seen fully engrossed in their phonics session. They applied their phonics skills well to their writing and could form letters accurately.

The governing body responded well to the inconsistencies that arose in the quality of leadership and teaching. Governors have been instrumental in putting in place a new leadership structure and have recognised that their own understanding of performance data was not strong enough. After training from an external consultant, they now have a far better understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. As a result of these actions, they are now better equipped to make a swift response should any inconsistencies emerge in the future.

Safeguarding is effective.

The arrangements for keeping pupils safe are thorough and meet the necessary statutory requirements. The designated safeguarding lead ensures that record-keeping is detailed and that concerns about pupils are followed up rigorously. Regular training and quiz activities have ensured that staff have a clear understanding of their safeguarding responsibilities. Staff know how to recognise different forms of abuse and are crystal clear on the processes for reporting incidents.

Pupils' understanding of how to keep themselves safe is a notable strength. You have put in place a range of activities to raise pupils' safety awareness. Regular visitors into school, such as from the police and air ambulance, help to deepen pupils' understanding. E-safety is taught well and older pupils in the school talked confidently about the dangers of the internet. Pupils talked of specific apps and games that provide potential risk and how they would be wary of being contacted online by someone they do not know. They are clear that they would tell a trusted adult immediately.

Inspection findings

- The proportions of pupils attaining the expected standard in reading at the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2 have been below the national average in the last two years. Consequently, you made reading provision a key priority in your school improvement plan. Positive actions in the plan have had an immediate impact on the reading culture across the school. Pupils love reading and speak knowledgeably about their favourite authors. They talked about how the special focus on different authors in the library, such as Michael Morpurgo, has encouraged them to read a range of texts. Reading records show that pupils are reading regularly. Leaders' assessment information demonstrates that the proportions achieving the expected standards are rising.
- During the academic year 2017/18, a few different approaches to the teaching of reading have been implemented across the school. Several classes have trialled a whole-class book approach, where pupils read and discuss one particular book. Pupils are motivated by this approach. Several shared how they enjoyed reading and answering questions on the fantasy text 'Bearwolf' and on the historical fantasy text 'Percy Jackson and the Lightning Thief'. Teachers also experiment with the teaching of new language. In a key stage 2 lesson, pupils searched for definitions of words such as 'fathom' as they analysed a poem for powerful vocabulary.
- These approaches have not formed a coherent whole-school approach to the teaching of reading. As a result, it is not yet clear how pupils are taught language and a progression of comprehension skills as they move through each class in the school. Leaders recognise this and already have staff meetings set aside to make the strategy crystal clear.
- The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in phonics at Year 1 has been just below the national average for the last two years. However, it is

important to recognise that small cohorts have a significant impact on the overall percentage score. A number of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities did not achieve the expected standard. By the end of Year 2, the proportion achieving the expected standard in phonics has been in line with or above the national average for the last three years.

- Phonics teaching is good in the early years and across key stage 1. High-quality training has led to good subject knowledge among staff. They teach sounds accurately and, as a result, pupils are confident when they decode unfamiliar words. Regular assessment ensures that pupils' progress in phonics is tracked well. Pupils are appropriately challenged and supported through flexible groupings.
- You have made a positive impact on the quality of mathematics teaching. Over the last two years, at the end of key stage 2, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard has been below the national average. The school's progress score has been similar to the national average over the last two years. Work in pupils' books, coupled with your assessment information, shows that more pupils are working at the expected standard for their age. A range of new strategies have been implemented well by staff. For example, pupils' work demonstrates that they are appropriately challenged. A particularly good characteristic of mathematics teaching is the quality of opportunities for reasoning. Pupils show confidence when justifying and explaining their understanding of a range of different concepts. You acknowledge that the clear evidence of rising attainment in pupils' books and assessments now needs to be reflected in the test outcomes at the end of key stage 2.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- a coherent whole-school approach to the teaching of language and reading comprehension skills is implemented across the school
- additional support for weaker readers, including disadvantaged pupils, is evaluated precisely for impact so that leaders know exactly which support is proving most successful
- the recent improvement in pupils' mathematical skills and understanding is reflected in test outcomes at the end of key stage 2.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education

for the Diocese of Hereford, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Herefordshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Matt Meckin
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, the head of school and other leaders. I also met with four governors. I spoke to pupils informally and formally. I made short visits to eight lessons with you and looked at a range of pupils' books. I spoke to parents and carers at the start of the day and considered 27 free-text responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. I also considered the responses from the online questionnaires completed by pupils and staff.

I scrutinised various documents, including the school's self-evaluation, the improvement plan and the documents that you use to check the quality of teaching. You shared with me the most recent assessments of pupils' attainment and progress. We discussed the national test results and assessments undertaken by pupils in 2016 and 2017. I also looked at the school's published information on the website, as well as minutes of governing body meetings and information about attendance, behaviour and safety.