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Mr Alan Brannen
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Brannen

Short inspection of St Lawrence C of E Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 3 October 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 January 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 being appointed as headteacher in January 2016, you have instigated several necessary changes across the school. Your clear vision has galvanised staff and created a strong sense of purpose. You have worked closely with governors to successfully tackle weaknesses that were apparent in the school. The senior leadership team is relatively new, but its members are already having a positive impact in their areas of responsibility. Staff are happy and feel well supported. The quality of teaching has improved and attainment is rising across the school.

The vast majority of parents are happy with the quality of education in the school. Several parents commented on the positive impact of recent changes. Typical comments were: 'The school has come on tremendously under the headteacher's leadership,' 'Our children love lessons and are proud of their school,' and 'The school has now put in place new clubs and wrap-around care.'

Leaders and staff put a strong emphasis on developing a well-rounded education for pupils. There is a broad range of extra-curricular clubs, sporting opportunities and performances. Pupils, parents and staff spoke with pride about the quality of the summer production of 'The Wizard of Oz'. Pupils enjoy responsibilities that they are given, such as being pupil mentors, librarians and lunch monitors. The school motto, 'Be responsible, encourage others, show respect and try our best', is prominent in the school and evident in pupils' actions. Behaviour in class and during

social times is excellent. These thoughtful opportunities have a very positive impact on pupils' personal development.

There has been a positive response to the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. You use checks that are carried out on teaching to identify staff who would benefit from observing others' teaching. Teaching has improved. However, the teaching of mathematics is not as strong as it should be. You have changed the marking policy so that pupils take greater responsibility for editing and improving their work.

The governing body is astute and knowledgeable. Governors have supported you to make the necessary changes in the school. They provide an appropriate level of challenge through meetings and visits. Their oversight of pupil premium and safeguarding is particularly effective.

One area of notable strength is the level of pastoral support. Pupils who have specific social and emotional needs are very well supported. The pastoral team also provides effective guidance to families who require additional support. Furthermore, strategies put in place for disadvantaged pupils are proving successful. Their attainment compares well to other pupils.

The early years now has better oversight from the senior leadership team. Reception have moved into a new building. The early years leader has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision. The proportion of children attaining a good level of development is improving each year.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. The designated safeguarding leads are thorough in their work. Staff are quick to report concerns and leaders follow up these concerns robustly. Record-keeping is meticulous. The quality of training for staff has a positive impact on their understanding of safeguarding processes. All staff take this aspect of school life very seriously. As a result, the safeguarding culture is strong. The procedures for recording pre-appointment checks on staff are also very well organised.

A thoughtful curriculum and assembly programme enables pupils to have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe. Pupils spoke about how they would tell a trusted adult immediately if they were concerned about something on the internet. They could also name online games that may hold a risk of people who they do not know contacting them. Road and bike safety initiatives add further value to pupils' awareness of safety.

Inspection findings

- The teaching of reading is a strength and the 2016 decline in attainment has been addressed. You made this a key priority and the culture for reading has been transformed. Phonics groups are organised well and staff teach new sounds

precisely. The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check in 2018 was well above the national average.

- Other initiatives to develop reading have had a positive impact. The new library and an investment in high-quality texts has helped to develop pupils' enthusiasm for reading. In key stage 2, work has been done to ensure that pupils have better quality experiences to prove that they understand the texts that they read. Staff have an effective system for identifying pupils who are not reading with an adult regularly enough. Additional reading is then put in place to help pupils' reading fluency. Pupils' reading attainment is now high across the school.
- Pupils' progress in mathematics has slowed down in recent years. Mathematics teaching is inconsistent across the school. You are aware of this weakness and some remedial actions have already taken place. Teachers make good use of practical apparatus and pictorial representations to help support pupils' understanding of number. There are also increasing opportunities for pupils to develop their reasoning skills. However, there is not a consistent level of challenge and not enough consideration is given to pupils' prior understanding. As a result, work is sometimes too easy for pupils.
- You have identified mathematics teaching as a key priority in the school improvement plan for this academic year. In this plan, you have put in place clear and measurable criteria to be able to judge if actions are successful. However, there is not a clear view of exactly what aspects of mathematics need to be improved and how you will go about doing this.
- The deputy headteacher has worked closely and effectively with staff to re-design the key stage 2 curriculum. Subject knowledge, skills and understanding have been planned out carefully within chosen themes. These themes are relevant to, and interesting for, pupils. For example, one of the current themes is transportation over time. In history, pupils are having this contextualised to their local town through the scenario 'Settle in Stretton' and 'Escape from Stretton'. This new curriculum was only introduced in September 2018, so it is too early to show the impact that it is having on pupil outcomes. Rightly, leaders are setting about re-designing the key stage 1 curriculum in a similar way.
- There are clear strengths in specific subjects across the school. Pupils are taught to swim in every year group, with superb results. All pupils who left Year 6 in 2018 could swim 25 metres. Woodland activities are taught across the school so that pupils learn skills for life, as well as a love of the outdoors. Pupils enjoy learning to play different instruments and singing their 'hymns on the hills' together on the Long Mynd. The teaching of religious education is ensuring that pupils learn about Christianity, while also developing a good understanding of other faiths and cultures.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- staff check carefully on pupils' prior understanding in mathematics and provide work that is suitably challenging

- the improvement plan for mathematics provides clear indications of how the subject will be developed across the school
- the positive start to curriculum development is built on so that pupils develop a deep level of knowledge and understanding across the full range of subjects.

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 Shropshire. 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 and several other leaders. I met with five governors and spoke to a representative from the local authority. I spoke to pupils informally and formally. I made short visits to 10 lessons and looked at a range of pupils' books. We spoke to parents at the start of the day and considered 71 free-text responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I also considered the responses from the online questionnaire 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. 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.