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Mr Richard Siviter
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Siviter

Short inspection of Telford Junior School

Following my visit to the school on 12 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 November 2013.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

You and the staff provide a welcoming ethos for pupils and parents and carers. Relationships are very positive between staff and pupils. Pupils are polite and courteous. They behave well in and around school, including at playtimes when the weather is wet. They have positive attitudes to their learning and work well in groups and with partners. The large majority of parents have positive views of the school and appreciate the rounded education provided. Comments include: 'My child feels happy and safe, and learns not only the academic subjects, but is taught to be a positive, responsible and engaged young person.' However, a small minority of parents believe that their children are not challenged sufficiently and could achieve more. Inspection evidence agrees with these points.

You provide secure and clear leadership for the school. Your assessment of the school's current performance is accurate. You and your governing body have identified that boys do not make sufficient progress in writing and that pupils' mathematical skills need developing. You are also working hard to improve the outcomes of disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils in the school. You have put plans in place to address these issues and there are some early signs of impact on pupils' progress. However, more work is needed to ensure that teachers challenge pupils

well, move them on in their learning and increase opportunities for them to record their work independently.

You have partially addressed the issues raised at the time of the last inspection. Teachers probe and check pupils' understanding through focused questioning and adhere to the school's marking and feedback policy. Senior leaders' roles have been extended and they have received relevant training. They are fully involved in monitoring the quality of teaching, provide regular reports to governors and line manage support staff. Leaders have also extended their own knowledge and understanding by gaining additional national qualifications and accreditation. However, the strand relating to improving achievement in mathematics has not been wholly addressed for all pupils. While standards have improved steadily over time, some pupils do not make good progress in mathematics from their starting points, especially girls and disadvantaged pupils.

Safeguarding is effective.

As the designated leader for safeguarding, you have created a strong culture for safeguarding pupils. Comprehensive checks are made to ensure that all adults working in school are safe to do so. Staff at all levels receive regular training to detect, record and report any concerns. School leaders work closely with other services that provide support to families to ensure that children are safe. Any referrals are followed up tenaciously. Record keeping is meticulous and all documents are stored securely. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose.

Pupils say that they feel safe in school. They have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe as this is taught well through curriculum activities, visitors and specific programmes, such as 'protective behaviours'. Online safety is promoted in technology lessons and key messages reinforced during safety week. Pupils know about the different forms bullying can take. They say that behaviour is good and any issues are quickly resolved. They are confident to talk to adults if they have a problem or are worried about anything.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry was to see how well girls achieve in mathematics. This is because published results between 2015 and 2017 show that they make less progress than boys. The introduction of the 'ready, steady, go, zoom' initiative allows pupils to select, with guidance, the level of work they feel is suited to their ability. This has helped the most able girls to access suitably demanding work. Practical activities have also been introduced to help pupils apply the mathematical skills taught. Additional support and resources are used well to help less able pupils. However, girls are notably less confident in mathematics compared with boys, especially in their use of mental arithmetic.
- Other factors also limit the achievement of both boys and girls in mathematics. Pupils across the school regularly complete lengthy calculation exercises. They

are not moved on to more challenging work when they demonstrate that they are competent and confident with number operations. This limits their progress. The excessive use of worksheets in mathematics detracts from pupils' ability to structure and record their work independently. Some worksheets used are outdated and lack challenge and are not consistently matched to pupils' ability levels. Pupils' problem-solving and reasoning skills are more evident in Year 6, but less well developed in other year groups. This is because teachers do not routinely incorporate these skills into the activities set. This directly affects the proportion of pupils able to demonstrate that they are working at greater depth by the end of key stage 2.

- My second line of enquiry focused on how well boys achieve in writing. This is because there are significant differences between their attainment and progress compared with those of girls. The school's own assessment of current pupils also shows that boys are below girls in writing in all year groups, especially at greater depth. You have identified this as a key area for improvement in your action plan. To this end, leaders have developed pupils' drafting and editing skills through the introduction of new initiatives. Work in writing journals demonstrates positive impact. There is little difference in the quality of boys' writing compared with that of girls in these books. However, in other work, boys write less than girls and lack the stamina and drive to use higher-order skills in their work. This reduces the proportion achieving greater depth.
- Leaders have also introduced new reading texts and topics that appeal to boys as stimuli for their writing. This is working well in Year 6. Pupils' handwriting is neat and cursive. A good range of writing genres is taught so pupils can write for different purposes, although, on occasion, some writing activities appeal more to girls than boys, such as writing about enchanted castles. Overall, pupils' use of grammar, punctuation and spelling is secure. Pupils attain above the national average in this aspect at the end of key stage 2 at both the expected and higher standards. Teachers' assessments of writing are accurate. This is because leaders are well trained and they regularly check teachers' judgements with the local authority and other schools. Some creative ideas and stimuli are also used successfully to capture pupils' imagination and motivate them. For example, a picture of 'The Winter King' engaged pupils fully and led to some high-quality written work.
- My final line of enquiry was to look at the school's work to support disadvantaged pupils. Leaders make good use of the pupil premium funding to expand the experiences of disadvantaged pupils and to secure their well-being. Residential visits and school events are subsidised to ensure that they are fully included in school life. There is a strong focus on reducing barriers to achievement, for example, in improving attendance and promoting personal and emotional well-being. Bus passes are provided for pupils whose parents struggle to get them to school regularly. Nurture support and counselling help pupils learn to manage their feelings and behaviour so that they can access learning and develop maturity and independence quickly. Interventions and classroom support are also provided to meet individual needs.

- Disadvantaged pupils have made considerably less progress than other pupils by the end of key stage 2 in 2018 and over the last three years. No disadvantaged pupils have reached the higher standard in mathematics. While current disadvantaged pupils are making similar progress to their peers, their attainment remains low in writing and mathematics, especially in Year 5 and Year 6. This is therefore an ongoing area for improvement.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- boys make stronger progress in writing and girls make stronger progress in mathematics, so that gender-attainment differences diminish
- teachers provide more opportunities for pupils to develop and apply their problem-solving and reasoning skills in mathematics tasks
- teachers challenge pupils and move them on when they show they are ready
- pupils are encouraged to record their work independently with less reliance on outdated and unchallenging worksheets
- disadvantaged pupils achieve as well as other pupils nationally, and an increased proportion achieve the higher standard in mathematics.

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

Yours sincerely

Heather Simpson
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, and members of your leadership team and governing body. I discussed the work of the school, including the processes and procedures in place for safeguarding. Together, we observed teaching in several classes, spoke with pupils about their learning and looked at the work in their books. I talked to pupils at lunchtime to gather their views about school, and to determine whether they felt safe and the typicality of behaviour.

I looked at a range of school documents, including the school's own information about pupils' achievement. I reviewed the school's evaluation of its work, together with the school development plan. I took account of the 120 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the free-text replies from parents. Views of parents who collected their children at the end of the school day were also

considered, together with 19 responses from the staff survey and 137 responses from the pupil survey.