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Mrs Brown
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Brown

Short inspection of Apley Wood Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 15 November 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 October 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. The effective work of school leaders helps pupils to succeed. You ensure that curriculum plans are based on developing the core skills. These skills help your pupils to make good progress. Pupils are excited and engaged by the topics that they study. Pupils are resilient and are not afraid to work hard and persevere. They have a mature attitude to their learning and reflect on what has been taught. As one pupil told me about history, 'We learn about the past and how it has influenced the present.' Parents', pupils' and staff's views of the school are positive about the improvements that you have made since the previous inspection.

Pupils spoke with enthusiasm about the school. They behave well and feel trusted and are expected to work hard. The range of visitors and educational experiences that you organise for pupils has added to the well-developed curriculum. For example, a theatre group worked with Year 3 pupils to produce a 'play in a day' to encourage healthy eating. This was shared with parents as part of a celebration assembly. You have developed a character education programme and this encapsulates your vision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. The programme is helping pupils to be well prepared for life in modern Britain.

You have successfully addressed the areas for improvement at the previous inspection. Leaders have invested in effective training to ensure that subject coordinators have a good understanding of their subjects. More pupils are now

reaching the expected standard across the curriculum. By the end of key stage 2, the proportion of pupils achieving both the expected and higher standard in reading, writing and mathematics is in line with the national average. However, weaknesses in the match of work to the needs of lower-attaining and disadvantaged pupils are preventing these pupils from catching up.

You have high expectations of staff and have developed leaders from the teachers you employed at the early stages in their careers. Staff spoke positively about the training they receive to develop them as subject leaders. Working with staff to help them learn the skills of subject leadership has ensured that the school and others in the teaching alliance benefit. The checks that you carry out on what is happening in classrooms help you to hold teachers to account. Leaders have an accurate understanding of strengths and areas for improvement. This knowledge is used to draw up sharply focused improvement plans. You have ensured that there are effective opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills across the curriculum. However, further work is needed to ensure that pupils apply their mathematical skills across the curriculum.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and the leadership team have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. The inclusion mentor works hard in providing quality support for vulnerable pupils and their families. You provide appropriate challenge to external agencies about their decisions of how to support your pupils and pupils are safe and well looked after.

Staff are trained appropriately to ensure that they are aware of how to keep pupils safe. You know the specific challenges facing your community and have suitable support in place for those who need it. Governors visit school frequently to check on the work of leaders. Your 'Pupil Safeguarding Board' allows learners to take an active role in communicating important safety messages to other pupils. Through assemblies and presentations your pupils learn to keep themselves safe. Staff feel supported to deal with the challenges that pupils face. Attitudes to school life are built on trust and pupils told me that they feel safe.

Inspection findings

- You have developed a group of effective subject leaders. They are well trained and supported to fulfil their roles. Leaders, through a programme of coaching, mentoring and shadowing experienced colleagues, have ensured that teachers have the skills to evaluate their own practice. Leaders are able to target support and training where it is needed.
- All leaders demonstrate dedication, enthusiasm and a determination for pupils to achieve well. As a result of leaders' actions to develop the foundation subjects, more pupils are reaching the expected standard.
- You and the leadership team have established an effective assessment system that allows you to check and monitor the progress that pupils are making in all subjects. Leaders use this information to plan support which helps pupils catch

up. These actions are leading to pupils making good progress. For example, the proportion of pupils attaining the expected and higher standard in all core subjects is in line with the national average.

- Where pupils are in danger of falling behind, leaders use the assessment information to target specific support for learners. The additional money received for disadvantaged pupils, to help them make good progress, is monitored well by leaders and evaluated carefully. Leaders know how well these pupils are doing and can evidence the positive effects of the additional support given. Leaders relentlessly pursue the requests that the school makes to external agencies for additional support for learners. Consequently, the school is doing all it can to get the help that learners need in a timely fashion.
- The assessment information gathered by the school is also used well by pupils. Pupils talk confidently about what they have learned and what they need to do to improve. For example, pupils are able to self-select targets to work on. They use these to help shape their own areas for development and have an excellent understanding of what they need to do to improve their work.
- Pupils' attitudes to school are good and you have worked hard to develop strategies that encourage all pupils to be ready to learn. This means that throughout the day, pupils engage in activities that focus them. They concentrate well and work together to solve problems.
- Pupils' personal development and their understanding of how to keep themselves safe are well developed through the curriculum and by the character education programme. You have ensured that safety, rights and responsibilities, well-being and relationships education are well embedded. Consequently, pupils' mature understanding of these issues is preparing them well for the next stage in their education.
- Across the foundation subjects pupils are able to practise and apply their writing skills and this is improving standards in literacy. However, the opportunities for the application of skills in mathematics are less well developed.
- Leaders' checks on what is happening in classrooms help them to evaluate the work of the school. Leaders and governors understand what is working well and improvement plans are sharply focused on appropriate further actions. For example, you have identified a focus on accelerating progress for disadvantaged pupils to help more of them reach the expected standards.
- The staff encourage pupils to 'convince me' through their responses to specific questions and challenges in mathematics. These opportunities provide pupils with effective practice in reasoning and explaining their thinking about mathematical concepts. This is helping more pupils reach the higher standards. However, the work given to lower-attaining and lower-attaining disadvantaged pupils is not closely matched to their needs. As a result, these pupils are not making enough progress to catch up and close the gap between their attainment and that of other pupils nationally.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- all teachers better match work to the needs of lower-attaining and lower-attaining disadvantaged pupils
- pupils practise and apply their skills in mathematics across the wider curriculum.

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

Yours sincerely

Richard Kentish
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you and other leaders. I also met with two governors. I spoke to pupils informally and formally. I made short visits to six 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 33 free-text responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire Parent View. I also considered the responses from the online questionnaire completed by pupils and staff alongside other surveys that you had completed. I met with a school improvement advisor commissioned by your governing body and had telephone conversations with two parents.

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 your most recent assessments of pupils' attainment and progress. We discussed the national test results and the results of assessments undertaken by pupils in 2017 and 2018. 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.