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Mrs Alison Earp
Headteacher
Malvern Wells CofE Primary School
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Dear Mrs Alison Earp

Short inspection of Malvern Wells CofE Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 13 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 February 2014.

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 your newly formed leadership team, with the support of the school improvement advisor, have identified the school's strengths and where it needs to improve. Your views of the school's weaknesses are accurate and you have started to address some of the identified shortcomings. Plans are in place to tackle areas of concern and there is a shared vision for school improvement. However, leaders recognise that there is not always attention to detail or a rigorous enough approach to some aspects of school improvement. This includes the analysis of pupil data and the monitoring of teaching and learning. In addition to this, pupils are not making enough progress in writing across school.

Despite these weaknesses, the school still has many strengths. You and your staff have worked hard to create an atmosphere within school that is warm and friendly. The Christian ethos underpins your work and the school values are evident in the care and compassion pupils demonstrate towards each other. The previous inspection report identified that the promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development was a strong feature of the school, and this is still the case.

Pupils say that they enjoy school and older pupils particularly enjoy taking greater responsibility for looking after the younger pupils on the playground. Pupils speak with great enthusiasm about school visits and particularly enjoy residential visits to

Wales. They are happy and keen to share their pride in the school. They are well behaved and eager to learn.

Parents value the benefits of a small village school and feel that children are well nurtured. All of the parents I spoke to and the majority who responded to Ofsted's Parent View questionnaire, said their children are happy at school and they would recommend it to another parent.

The early years foundation stage is an attractive and vibrant environment for children to learn in. A focus on improving provision for the youngest children means they have more opportunities to work independently and make choices over their learning.

Within lessons teachers ask questions that encourage pupils to think deeply and reflect on their learning. The use of sentence starters provide pupils with a framework for discussion. Clear improvements can be seen in pupils' spelling across school. The use of 'non-negotiables' in lessons reminds pupils of the importance of the correct use of punctuation.

Pupils have opportunities within the curriculum to learn about life in modern Britain. They understand the importance of learning about religions and cultures that are different to their own. There are planned opportunities to visit a variety of places of worship and visitors from different religions are invited into school to talk about their beliefs.

The newly formed governance team is a strong and coherent group. It has a clear overview of the needs of the school. Governors recognise the important role they hold as a critical friend and are ambitious for the success of the school. They have high expectations and the challenge they provide is starting to encourage a more rigorous approach to school improvement.

The previous inspection report identified several areas for improvement. While some actions have been taken to tackle these weaknesses, leaders have not been rigorous or swift enough in addressing them. There has recently been a renewed focus on the action points from the last report but this has not been timely enough to ensure that sufficient progress has been made over the past four years.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is an effective culture of safeguarding within the school. All safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and the school provides a safe environment for all pupils. Systems for monitoring staff and pupil use of the internet are in place.

Pupils can talk with confidence about how to stay safe online both at home and at school. Pupils say that they feel confident talking to the trusted adults around them. They feel cared for and safe at school.

All parents that I spoke to said that they felt that their children were safe and well

looked after at school. The majority of parents who responded to Parent View agreed with this.

All staff have regular training to help them understand their responsibilities in keeping pupils safe from harm. There are clear systems and procedures in place for reporting child protection concerns. There are rigorous procedures in place for checking the suitability of visitors and supply staff visiting school.

Inspection findings

- The newly formed governance team identified that in order to drive school improvement an increased leadership capacity was needed. They have been instrumental in supporting you in appointing two part-time assistant headteachers. These appointments, although only from September, have already made a positive impact on school. Assistant headteachers talk clearly, and with accurate knowledge, about school evaluation and improvement priorities. They are passionate about driving school initiatives forward and improving outcomes for pupils.
- Pupils' attainment in reading, and mathematics has been well above national figures at the end of key stage 1 for the past three years. However, attainment in writing is not as strong and fell below national figures in 2018. In key stage 2, pupils' attainment has been well above national figures in reading and mathematics. There was a dip in results in key stage 2 in 2018 and leaders can clearly identify the reasons for this. Attainment in writing has not been as strong as reading and mathematics. Furthermore, pupils' progress from their starting points in writing have declined over the past three years. Leaders have not been rigorous enough in analysing external data in order to identify this decline.
- Leaders hold termly pupil-progress meetings with teachers. Leaders have recently introduced a resource that identifies pupils against their prior starting points and this forms the main focus of the meeting. This has resulted in teachers having a firmer knowledge of pupils' prior learning and enables them to focus more on the progress pupils are making from their individual starting points. Pupil-progress meetings identify pupils at risk of not reaching their end of year target. Actions are identified and for some pupils additional support is put in place. However, some of the actions are not specific enough or only 'encourage' pupils to seek extra support.
- Although leaders look at the quality of work in pupils' books and the quality of teaching in the classrooms, there is no clear, systematic approach to the monitoring of teaching and learning. For example, there is limited evidence that monitoring clearly identifies the individual development needs of teachers or that leaders respond to those needs.
- Leaders have sought external support to provide training focused on ensuring that teachers teach pupils the skills needed to write effectively. The impact of this training is evident in some of the pupils' books. In the best examples, pupils learn new skills and practise them in different contexts before using them in a longer piece of writing. However, there are still some inconsistencies across school in the approach to the teaching of writing skills.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- consistency in the quality and approach to the teaching of writing across school is secured in order to improve the progress that pupils make in writing
- capacity to drive improvement grows through the development of the skills of assistant head teachers
- a rigorous approach to systems and procedures, including the monitoring of teaching and learning and the analysis of school data, that is timely and effective is introduced.

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

Melanie Davies
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, the assistant headteachers, five governors, the school improvement advisor from the local authority, parents and pupils. I visited lessons with the headteacher. I looked at the quality of work in pupils' books. I looked at pupil files and reviewed the single central record. I reviewed school documentation and policies, including the school website. I reviewed feedback all responses to parent and staff questionnaires.