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Mrs Mary Freeman
Executive Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Freeman

Short inspection of Shobdon Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 5 December 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.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You became executive headteacher in September 2017 when the school joined another local school to become a federation under one governing body. You have further strengthened leadership at Shobdon primary with the appointment of a head of school and a part-time inclusion manager. You and your staff are dedicated to meeting the needs of all pupils. Leaders ensure that pupils benefit from a broad and balanced curriculum that they find interesting and exciting. As a result, pupils are happy to come to school, where they enjoy learning. Your pupils behave very well.

Parents are highly supportive of the work of the school. They are confident that their children are safe and well looked after. In addition, parents told me that their children are making good progress with their learning. Parents said that staff are very approachable and will take the time to listen to any concerns that they might have. One parent summed up the views of many others when he said, 'I couldn't be happier with the provision here.'

You understand the school's strengths and areas for development, and your action plans reflect this. Pupils attain well in a range of subjects across the curriculum and, as a result, they are well prepared for the next stage of their education. You have high expectations of all pupils. Leaders have introduced a new approach to how they make checks on pupils' progress. Over the last two years, most pupils made good progress in reading, writing and mathematics but some did not make as much progress as they could have done. Leaders now ensure that half-termly reviews of

pupils' progress identify any pupils at risk of falling behind, and leaders take action to provide additional support where it is needed.

Leaders have successfully addressed the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Pupils have many opportunities to produce extended pieces of writing. Over the last two years, attainment at the end of key stage 2 in writing both at the expected standard and at greater depth has been above the national average.

Leaders were also asked to improve the way teaching assistants were used to support pupils' learning. Leaders ensure that teaching assistants are included in whole-school training, and in addition they have targets as part of the performance management cycle. Teaching assistants benefit from specific training to support any pupils who have additional needs, for example those who have specific learning difficulties. Leaders ensure that they provide feedback to teaching assistants about strengths and areas for improvement as part of half-termly checks on the quality of teaching and learning.

Governors are very committed to the school. They played an effective part in the creation of the federation so that the transition was smooth for pupils, parents and staff. They know what is working well and what could be further improved. They provide appropriate challenge and support to leaders. They enjoy coming into school to find out for themselves about the quality of provision. They manage resources well so that the school benefits from being part of the federation. This includes provision of training to further improve the quality of teaching and learning and opportunities to share resources and to provide opportunities for staff to develop leadership skills.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors ensure that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. All staff understand that safeguarding pupils is a priority. You ensure that all staff are trained to identify signs of abuse and that they know exactly how to report any concerns they have. The staff I spoke to during the inspection said that they believed that pupils were safe in school. Child protection records are stored securely. They are well organised and contain relevant information.

Governors understand their safeguarding responsibilities very well. They have up-to-date training, including how to ensure the safe recruitment of staff.

Pupils told me that they feel safe in school and they could explain why. They are confident that there would be an adult who could help them if they were worried about anything. Pupils told me that they learn how to stay safe, for example, when using the internet and when they are out in the local community either crossing roads or riding their bicycles. Pupils say that everyone behaves very well because the rules are clear. They have a good understanding of what bullying is and are adamant that it does not happen at Shobdon.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry was to find out about children's progress in Reception. Leaders have ensured that they plan the transition into school carefully so that teachers have a thorough understanding of children's starting points. Teachers use this information to plan tasks that build on what children already know and can do. In addition, teachers match topics and activities well to children's interests. During the inspection, we saw children who were highly engaged in being 'vets looking after pets' in the role-play area. Adults ensure that resources are of high quality and that children can access them easily. Children are encouraged to be creative, and many activities provide opportunities for children to make choices for themselves about how they complete tasks with a variety of possible outcomes.
- Adults in the Reception class have good subject knowledge and they use this to provide a broad and balanced curriculum while maintaining a focus on the important basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics. Parents receive information about what their children are learning about and the progress they are making in monthly newsletters, through online learning journals and detailed end-of-year reports. Leaders ensure that children's progress is tracked carefully across all areas of the curriculum. This information shows that children make good progress in all areas of learning.
- I wanted to find out about how effectively teaching meets the needs of all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) or who are disadvantaged. During the inspection we focused on the teaching of mathematics. Leaders have ensured that teachers have strong subject knowledge and that they use this to plan lessons that will develop pupils' knowledge and skills across a broad curriculum in mathematics. Pupils with SEND are well supported, and as a result they make progress in line with their peers. In addition, disadvantaged pupils' books show that there is no discernible difference in the progress they make compared with that of other pupils.
- Teachers make good use of mathematical equipment and diagrams to ensure that pupils understand new concepts. In addition, younger pupils use these materials particularly well to bring meaning to their calculations. Pupils' books show that they practise and refine calculation skills and that there are opportunities to apply their skills and knowledge when solving problems. Teachers have a high expectation of the mathematical vocabulary pupils will use in explanations. As a result, pupils develop good reasoning skills. Leaders ensure that all teachers know the starting points and any additional needs of all the pupils in their class. They use this information to plan lessons that build on what pupils already know and can do. Occasionally, the most able pupils complete work that they find easy before they move onto the more difficult tasks that teachers have planned for them.
- My final line of enquiry was about the school's curriculum. You and other leaders have planned a rich curriculum that reflects the interests of the pupils. In addition, leaders make relevant links to the local community. This is important because you want the school to remain at the heart of the village. Last year pupils worked on a project about a local blackcurrant farm during which they

were able to develop new skills. For example, pupils were able to carry out interviews with adults at the farm and produce a short film that demonstrated what they had learned. Leaders make effective links between subjects that reinforce pupils' knowledge of what they are learning about. For example, in a recent project about the First World War, pupils read and discussed poetry written by soldiers at the time of the conflict. In addition, they created realistic, small-scale model trenches. As a result, pupils gained a deeper understanding of the conditions faced by the soldiers during the war. You are currently refining how to assess pupils' progress in the foundation subjects. This is because you are determined to ensure that the most able pupils are sufficiently challenged across the school in a wide range of subjects.

- Pupils have frequent opportunities to apply their reading, writing and mathematics skills in a range of subjects. For example, in science pupils write evaluations of the experiments they have planned. They use mathematical skills to make accurate measurements and calculations linked, for example, to time, distance and weight. Teachers support learning with well-chosen texts. For example, pupils in Years 3 and 4 read 'Friend or foe' by Michael Morpurgo as part of their recent history topic.
- Leaders and governors also place importance on pupils' personal, social and emotional development. Pupils are proud to take on additional responsibilities. For example, as librarians, older pupils hear younger pupils read and help them to choose books. Pupils appreciate their school's beautiful grounds and take their roles on the eco-committee very seriously. They get involved with projects to save water and electricity throughout the year. Leaders ensure that pupils develop an age-appropriate understanding of British values. Pupils understand why democracy and laws are important. They are very respectful of differences in culture and religion and say that everyone would be welcome at their school, regardless of their background.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the most able pupils are moved on to more challenging tasks in mathematics as soon as they are ready
- they continue with their work to develop an assessment system for foundation subjects to ensure that the most able pupils make the progress of which they are capable.

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

Yours sincerely

Jo Evans
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, the head of school, parents and governors. I spoke on the telephone to an education consultant who provides support for the school, and to a representative from the local authority. Together we visited classrooms and looked at pupils' work. I also met with a group of six pupils.

I reviewed the school's website and documents, including: the single central record; child protection records; the school's improvement plans; monitoring information; and pupils' progress and assessment information. I took account of the 14 responses by parents, including eight comments from parents by text. There were no responses to the staff questionnaire, but I met with a group of four staff during the inspection. There were no responses to the pupil questionnaire.