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14 January 2019

Mr Matthew Medd
Academy Headteacher
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Dear Mr Medd

Short inspection of Stoke Gabriel Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 11 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in March 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have a strong commitment to ensuring that pupils receive a rounded education that prepares them well for life in modern Britain. Together with the staff and governors, you have created a welcoming and vibrant learning environment that promotes pupils' enthusiasm for learning. Pupils arrive at school promptly each morning, eager to learn, and they are warmly greeted by you and your staff. Parents and pupils appreciate the welcome you bring at the start of the school day.

The school joined Link Academy Trust in April 2016. The trust has worked closely with leaders to bring about further strategic improvements. Since joining the trust, you have made good use of its expertise and support. The local governing board is effective and has a good understanding of the school and the aims of the trust. They ask challenging questions and routinely visit the school to check that planned actions are taking shape.

Your evaluation of the school's effectiveness is accurate. You have a precise view of the school's strengths and areas for further development. Leaders make effective use of monitoring systems to quickly establish the school's strengths and weaknesses. You acknowledge that more pupils are capable of achieving the higher standards in writing and mathematics by the end of key stage 2.

The vast majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent

View, were very positive about the school and the progress their children make. The parents I talked to during the inspection confirmed that they are pleased with the quality of education that their children receive. However, a small minority of parents raise concerns that bullying is not managed effectively. Pupils, however, were adamant that bullying at school does not exist. They told the inspector that bullying is often mistaken for 'falling out'. You and the leaders from the trust recognise that more needs to be done to improve communication with parents.

Pupils are well behaved, polite and sociable. They enjoy school and find the opportunities that are provided for them stimulating and fun. As a result, they listen carefully in lessons and work hard.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Pre-employment checks on staff are precise and systematic. Safeguarding and child protection training is carried out regularly and this ensures that staff are aware of any risks to children. This includes training on the 'Prevent' duty to protect children from radicalisation and political extremism.

Staff have a good understanding of their responsibilities and are taking effective steps to ensure that pupils understand how to stay safe. Most parents, rightly, believe that pupils are safe in school. Pupils are confident that teachers and staff keep them safe. Pupils identify different ways that the school teaches them to be safe, including when using the internet, and know what action to take if they ever feel at risk.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection, we agreed on four lines of enquiry. The first of these related to pupils' attendance, which has remained below the national average for several years. You and your office team work diligently with pupils who are absent from school. You have introduced a new system for identifying pupils who are at risk of poor attendance. This is followed up further with reports to local agencies. Where no improvements are seen, leaders, with support from the education welfare officer, take further action. Consequently, leaders' actions to reduce persistent absence and improve attendance have been successful.
- Next, I checked how leaders' actions were improving the quality of reading across key stage 1. In 2018, pupils' attainment in reading was lower than that seen in writing and mathematics. I listened to pupils in key stage 1 read. Pupils discussed their chosen books in great detail. Most pupils read with fluency and, in some cases, expression and intonation. You have promoted the value of reading successfully. Pupils' reading records provide a helpful communication link between reading at home and school. Pupils particularly enjoy the challenges you have set, and they are motivated by the new online reading programme. As a result, current pupils make good progress in reading.
- My third line of enquiry was to consider the depth and breadth of the school's curriculum. Leaders have been successful in introducing a new approach to the

curriculum from September 2018. The curriculum leader has a strong rationale for the curriculum's design. Teaching staff regularly review the curriculum to ensure that it meets the school's vision to 'enlighten pupils' curiosity'.

- Pupils have a wide range of opportunities to develop their literacy and numeracy skills. They value the wider curriculum that the school provides. For example, pupils in Years 5 and 6 report that the visit to Slapton Sands helped them develop a better understanding of how the allied forces rehearsed for the D-Day landings. This approach has been particularly effective in improving the quality of teaching in subjects such as history, geography and music. The quality of art that is displayed around the school is of a high standard. Pupils have developed a broad range of artistic skills.
- However, across the school, the quality of pupils' written work in wider curriculum subjects is not of the same standard as that seen in English and mathematics books. Pupils' handwriting and presentation are particularly weak.
- The curriculum is focused on pupils' learning about both the local and wider area. Pupils benefit from an array of extra-curricular activities, for instance rock climbing and sailing. They welcome the opportunity to represent their school in the community by attending homes for the elderly, where they read and play games together. This has a positive impact on pupils' social and moral development.
- My final line of enquiry was to look closely at the provision for the most able pupils in key stage 2. In 2018, the proportion of pupils who attained a higher standard in writing and mathematics was not as high as it was in reading. Work in pupils' books and the school's performance information confirm that there remains some variability in the impact of teaching for the most able pupils. In some year groups, teachers do not use what pupils know, understand and can do to plan and adapt tasks that challenge pupils' thinking and deepen their understanding. Some of the most able pupils report that they find work too easy. As a result, the most able pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable in writing and mathematics.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they improve the consistency of teaching in writing and mathematics so that the most able pupils can excel and achieve the higher standards that they are capable of by the end of Year 6
- the headteacher, senior leaders and staff continue to work with parents to improve relationships, especially when parents have concerns about attendance and bullying
- teachers have high expectations and adopt a consistent approach to the teaching of handwriting to improve the quality of pupils' presentation across the full range of curriculum subjects.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of Link Academy Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Devon. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Matt Middlemore
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, other leaders and two governors, including the chair of the local governing body and a member from the trust board. I considered the 61 responses to Parent View, including 46 free-text comments. I spoke with pupils formally and informally during the day. I also considered the 11 responses to the staff survey. We observed teaching and learning jointly. I looked at a range of pupils' work in their exercise books and in their classrooms. I scrutinised a range of school documentation, including the single central record, your school self-evaluation document and improvement plan, attendance and current pupils' assessment information.