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Mrs Susan Harris
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Dear Mrs Harris

Short inspection of Short Wood Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 5 March 2019, 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 March 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Since the previous inspection, you and your senior leadership team have continued to improve many aspects of your school. You have high expectations of and aspirations for your pupils and staff. You understand the community your school serves and work hard to overcome any challenges faced by pupils and parents. You know the school very well, its strengths and any remaining aspects that fall short of your high expectations. Your self-evaluation is detailed, accurate and understood by all, including governors. Your plans to address the few areas that need to improve are clear and appropriate, with decisive actions that focus on improving outcomes for pupils. You review your actions regularly for their impact and address any that are deemed not successful. You work closely with the school's improvement partner, who provides additional scrutiny and support on all aspects of your school.

The last inspection report highlighted some areas for improvement, most of which have been addressed effectively by you and your colleagues. Pupils are given many and varied opportunities to write at length in a range of subjects. Teachers routinely help pupils to improve their work and move their learning on. The area for improvement that highlighted the achievements of most-able pupils is still a work in progress. You have recognised this, and this aspect of your work has now been prioritised in your development plans and made a clear focus for all teachers across the school.

The curriculum is highly effective in broadening pupils' learning experiences and giving them many opportunities to learn in a range of different settings and subjects. For example, the early years 'squirrel school' allows children to learn outside through access to stimulating sensory materials and experiences. The 'creative curriculum' ensures that pupils gain experiences that they may otherwise not have had through providing visits, trips and excursions. Pupils learn about topics that cascade into a wide range of subjects and ensure that pupils' knowledge and understanding is studied in sufficient depth.

Short Wood Primary School is a strong community and relationships are exemplary across the school. Morale is high. All members of staff who responded to the inspection questionnaire said that they are proud to work at the school and all agreed that the school is well led and managed. Parents value your leadership and the education that the school provides for their children. An overwhelming majority of parents who responded to Parent View agreed that the school's pastoral support is of high quality. Pupils become quickly a member of the school 'family' and when asked what the best thing is about the school they say, 'being a Short-Woody'. Pupils are proud of their school and enjoy coming to school.

Many pupils join the school with English as an additional language (EAL) or with deficits in speech and language development. You have taken effective actions to ensure that pupils become quickly proficient in English and close any developmental gaps they may have. For example, the school now employs a speech and language therapist and you have employed staff with EAL knowledge and skills. You have ensured that all pupils understand that 'English is the language of learning' and, consequently, pupils speak eloquently in good English about their learning experiences. This work has also been extended to include and support parents. For example, parents can join the school on a daily basis at the end of the day for 'parent story time' and parents can visit their children weekly in the early years to work with them on some activities, including language and mathematics work.

You have introduced successfully a mental health focus in your school. Pupils and children complete the 'calm brain' activities at least three times a day. During these times, pupils are equipped with mental health and mind-calming techniques that they can deploy independently. This helps them to refocus their minds after breaktime and lunchtime, for example. As a result, the school is a calm and very purposeful learning environment. Pupils are focused and ready to learn after playtime and for the whole day, including late afternoon. This strategy has also improved pupils' behaviour. Fixed-term exclusions are low and behaviour around the school is exemplary.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leadership of this area is a clear strength. Staff understand that keeping pupils safe is their top priority. They have focused child protection training paired with regular updates so that they are aware of pertinent issues, including local and new priorities such as child sexual exploitation. Consequently, members of staff are vigilant and readily pass on any concerns that they have about pupils. You have ensured that all

safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. You and your colleagues follow up diligently any concerns you have with any outside agencies and work effectively with them to ensure that children are safe. The culture around the school of promoting pupils' safety is excellent.

All the pupils that I spoke to during the inspection said that they feel safe in school. They all readily named an adult to whom they would report any concerns. They said that 'school is a safe, happy and fun place to be'. The curriculum effectively underpins pupils' understanding through regular teaching on how to stay safe. For example, pupils understand how to keep themselves safe from potential dangers that can arise when using the internet. During the time of the inspection, pupils in Year 5 worked on a poster to highlight how to keep themselves safe online.

All staff who responded to the staff questionnaire said that pupils are safe in school, as did almost all parents who responded to Parent View.

Inspection findings

- The first aspect that I looked at was pupils' progress in mathematics. You have appointed a new middle leader for mathematics. The new leader has worked hard to identify barriers to pupils' progress in this area. As a result, improvement strategies have been implemented that are beginning to have an impact on pupils' learning. For example, middle leaders of key stage 1 and 2 now work closely together to plan lessons and ensure that work includes a greater range of mathematical skills such as problem-solving across year groups. Pupils' work shows clearly that they are becoming more versed in those skills. Consequently, pupils are making better progress in mathematics, and more are beginning to work at greater depth.
- My second focus area was children's development in the early years. Leadership of this area is strong. The leader has engaged in visits to other settings and countries to gain an insight into effective early years teaching. She is reflective and monitors carefully what impact any changes are having on children's learning. She has introduced a number of changes such as a calmer, less busy learning environment and a clear focus on children's speech and language development. Many children join the early years with language skills and abilities that are below those typical for children of a similar age. Teachers and staff now implement a range of language acquisition skills to ensure that children catch up with their peers. As a result of these changes, children develop well and a greater proportion of those leaving Reception now reach a good level development. Leaders do not yet ensure that children's work and learning journals are shared effectively with parents. Consequently, parents are not always able to build as well as they might on what their children are learning at school.
- Another aspect I looked at was the progress that groups of pupils are making across the school, especially pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), those who are disadvantaged and the most able pupils. Pupils with SEND are effectively supported in lessons and their pastoral care is a clear focus for all staff at the school. Teachers know their pupils well and know when to intervene to help them catch up. Additional adults support effectively pupils in

lessons. As a result, pupils with SEND make strong progress. Disadvantaged pupils' progress is improving. Information about their progress shows that, while some differences remain, disadvantaged pupils now make good progress. There is hardly any difference in the standard of their work compared to that of their peers. Pupils have spoken with pride about their work and showed me their many achievements during lesson visits.

- Most-able pupils do not yet consistently and routinely receive work that is sufficiently challenging for them. In some lessons, most-able pupils finish their work and wait for all other pupils to finish before their learning moves on. This means that their learning slows. You have identified this and made this aspect of your work a whole-school focus. Staff training and bespoke support for some teachers are planned and the school's improvement adviser has been involved, providing additional support. The full impact of those actions on pupils' outcomes is yet to be seen.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers routinely plan tasks and provide work that sufficiently stretch and challenge pupils, especially the most able pupils
- children's learning journals and work in the early years provision is shared regularly with parents so that they are more able to build on what children are learning at school.

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 and Wrekin. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Bianka Zemke
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, members of the senior leadership team, three governors, including the chair and vice-chair, and your school improvement partner. I spoke informally with pupils during lessons and at break and lunchtimes. I visited several classes with senior leaders, looked at pupils' work and spoke with learners about their work. I scrutinised several documents including the school's self-evaluation, safeguarding and child protection records, external review documents and achievement information. Parents' views were considered through the 45 responses to Parent View. Staff's views were considered through the 44 staff responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire.