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Carolyn Scott
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Dear Mrs Scott

Short inspection of Tewkesbury Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 8 February 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 May 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.**

Since the previous inspection, you have continued to galvanise staff and develop school resources to provide a rich, inclusive experience for pupils. In many areas of the school, the quality of teaching has continued to improve as leaders have sought to address areas for improvement from the previous inspection. This is particularly notable in key stage 1 and early years, where achievement has been consistently strong. Staff have benefited from bespoke professional development and partnerships with other schools, which have helped them to share and improve practice.

However, you were disappointed with key stage 2 achievement in writing and mathematics in 2017. Leaders were quick to analyse the reasons for this, one of which was that teaching did not fully meet the demands of the new curriculum. The group of pupils who left the school last year also consisted of many pupils with complex needs. Nevertheless, the support put in place for them did not have the desired impact on raising pupils' achievement. Moreover, staff are too keen to attribute pupils' underperformance to contextual issues, such as background. This limits expectations of what pupils can achieve.

You have a detailed understanding of all aspects of the school's work. However, leaders' views of the school's effectiveness, in some respects, are overgenerous.

This has prevented change in some areas from being as rapid as it otherwise would be.

You encourage all staff to contribute their ideas for improving the school and play a role. As you said to me, 'You don't need to have a title to be a leader in this school.' You have also restructured leadership in order to tackle weaknesses more robustly. Consequently, middle leaders now play a more significant role in leading strategies to improve teaching and raise achievement. They relish their work because they enjoy the responsibility you have given them, and feel trusted to take risks and exercise their initiative. You have wisely invested in this group and provided them with training to develop their subject and leadership skills. As a result, the school now benefits from a highly committed group of middle leaders who have strong potential.

Governors are also passionate advocates for the school. They bring different skills and expertise to their work and are involved in the life of the school. Minutes of recent governing board meetings show that the questions they ask of leaders are becoming increasingly challenging. However, their understanding of achievement information is not sharp enough to ensure that they ask the most pertinent questions about pupils' progress. For example, governors have not asked sufficiently probing questions about the progress of groups of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, in writing and mathematics in 2017.

The school is a warm, happy and inclusive place. Staff have successfully worked hard to create a dynamic, vibrant learning environment which encourages pupils to see learning as a fun activity. Corridors and classrooms are rich in colourful displays that celebrate pupils' work and are designed to help them in their learning. The school has a wide range of resources, which helps pupils to get the most out of school. For example, they use extensive information technology facilities in their lessons, which kindle their enthusiasm for learning. Also, the new 'In-Reach' centre provides useful academic and pastoral support for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. Attendance has been consistently above average and exclusions low because pupils enjoy coming to school.

Pupils are polite, cheerful and courteous. They are attentive in class, settle down to tasks promptly and enjoy working with each other when encouraged to do so. However, some pupils who spoke with me said that their learning was occasionally affected by low-level disruption.

Safeguarding is effective.

Procedures for the protection of children are well established. This is because designated leads confidently understand their roles and provide clear, helpful guidance to other staff. All staff have received appropriate training; registers and certificates are kept to ensure that no member of staff misses out. Staff know the procedures to follow should they wish to report a concern about a child. They know that no concern is too small and will readily speak up. This is because leaders have been keen to cultivate a supportive, open culture where it is better to share than

not. Designated staff follow up referrals to ensure that appropriate action is taken, including liaison with external agencies, where required. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe, including online, and to manage risk.

The vast majority of pupils who responded to the pupil survey agree that there is an adult at school they would talk to if something was worrying them. Pupils who spoke with me said that bullying 'is rare'. Furthermore, nearly all pupils who responded to the survey said that bullying was effectively dealt with when it did occur.

Checks to ensure that staff are suitable to work with children are up to date, comprehensive and well organised. Relevant senior staff and all governors have had safer recruitment training. This ensures that individuals who apply to join the school are also suitable to work with children.

Inspection findings

- At the beginning of the inspection, we agreed on the key lines of enquiry to be considered during the day. These included establishing the effectiveness of actions to raise the achievement of pupils in writing and mathematics in key stage 2. A second line of enquiry considered the extent to which areas for improvement from the last inspection had been addressed. Finally, we considered whether safeguarding is effective. These lines of enquiry, where they have not already been referred to, are considered below.
- The achievement of pupils who left the school in 2017 was below average in writing and mathematics, particularly for disadvantaged pupils. The underachievement of middle-ability pupils in writing was also notable. By contrast, pupils' achievement in reading was in line with the national average.
- Leaders responded promptly to underachievement in 2017 by adapting teaching approaches to better meet the demands of the new national curriculum. A more robust approach to developing pupils' mastery of mathematics was started in September. Although middle leaders are leading these initiatives with confidence and pace, they still need to become firmly established. As yet, there is not conclusive evidence of impact, although the school's progress information for last term was positive. As one middle leader told me, 'We're at the beginning of a journey.'
- Following the previous inspection, achievement in mathematics rose in key stage 2 but has since declined. However, in other areas of the school, such as key stage 1, achievement in mathematics has been consistently strong over time.
- Current pupils in key stage 2 are making better progress in writing and mathematics. This is supported by current progress information and, to some extent, the work in pupils' books. Teachers' expectations of what most pupils can achieve, including those who are disadvantaged, are increasing, and this shows in the generally high standards of presentation. However, some pupils, particularly the most able, could be pushed to achieve more. Only two thirds of the pupils who responded to the pupil survey reported that teachers gave them challenging work most or all of the time.

- Pupils are being provided with ample opportunities to develop their calculation work in mathematics. However, pupils' reasoning and problem solving is not being developed to the same extent. Staff persuasively argue that pupils' reasoning is being well developed verbally. Nevertheless, the absence of opportunities to articulate reasoning in written form prevents pupils from making the progress of which they are capable in this area.
- Since the previous inspection, staff have worked in a persistent and determined way to build better relationships with parents. They have been largely successful. You are very keen for the school to be perceived as an accessible place where parents feel encouraged to participate in their children's learning. For these reasons, you greet parents at the front entrance every morning when you are able. Methods of communication have improved, so that staff are now able to inform parents of news and developments by text and email. Parents are encouraged to come into school for various activities and the school facilities are used by different members of the school community. Consequently, the large majority of parents who responded to Parent View, the online survey, are satisfied with the school's work and would recommend the school. A small minority of parents are not satisfied, but leaders continue to take action to improve parents' experience of school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- Achievement in writing and mathematics at key stage 2 continues to rise as a result of:
 - continued efforts by middle leaders to fully establish key initiatives to raise achievement
 - increased challenge for pupils, especially the most able, who are capable of achieving more
 - ensuring that all steps are taken to develop pupils' reasoning skills fully
 - staff continuing to raise expectations of what pupils can achieve, particularly those with complex needs and backgrounds.
- The quality of leadership and management improves as a result of:
 - leaders honing the accuracy of self-evaluation so that it fully reflects the school's effectiveness
 - governors developing a sharper understanding of the progress of different groups of pupils and using this knowledge to inform their questioning.

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

Yours sincerely

Steve Smith
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I spoke to you, the deputy safeguarding lead and the special educational needs coordinator. I also spoke to middle leaders, representatives of the governing body, pupils and the local authority's performance adviser.

You and I visited lessons to observe pupils' attitudes to learning. I also scrutinised the work in pupils' books.

A range of documentary evidence was considered, which included the school's self-evaluation and school improvement plan. I considered governing body minutes and external notes of visit. I also reviewed information relating to pupils' progress. Additionally, I scrutinised various safeguarding records, including those relating to the suitability of staff to work with children.

I took account of 42 responses to the Parent View online survey, 32 responses to the staff survey and 212 responses to the pupil survey issued during the inspection.