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Mrs Lisa Dodd
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Dear Mrs Dodd

Short inspection of Curdworth Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 21 March 2017, 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 November 2011.

This school continues to be good.

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

You took on your role as headteacher in September 2016, and have wasted no time in getting to know the school, staff and pupils very well. You have identified swiftly the school's strengths and areas for development. You have acted with appropriate urgency to establish effective systems where improvements have been needed.

You recognise that outcomes for pupils at the end of key stage 2 in 2016 showed a drop in standards when compared with previous years. In this smaller than average size primary school, I understand that test results can vary considerably because of the small numbers taking the tests. Pupils had previously made year-on-year progress which compared favourably with national figures. Past test results also show that disadvantaged pupils did at least as well as other pupils who were not disadvantaged. However, in 2016, national test results showed that pupils' outcomes in reading and mathematics had fallen to well below average, and in writing to below average. Overall, disadvantaged pupils did not achieve as highly as others. You have carefully assessed the reasons for this decline in pupils' achievement last year, and have put in place appropriate and successful strategies to ensure that this does not become a trend.

You have created an effective small leadership team with the knowledge, experience and initiative to thrive on the leadership opportunities you are providing. Collectively, leaders know exactly what to do when improvements are needed. The governing body is effective in challenging leaders to improve the school's performance. This is particularly so since governors have gained more accurate information to enable them to understand clearly why pupils' progress fell and what needed to be done to rectify this.

Pupils spoke to me about how much they enjoyed the wide range of subjects they study at school. They were able to explain how their work has improved as a result of teachers' help and guidance. They are pleased that the school council represents their views and makes a difference to school life –for example, by appointing older pupils as house leaders whose duties include helping to escort other pupils to and from assemblies.

Your work with a local consortium of schools is valuable in supporting the development of your own leadership skills as a new headteacher. It is also enabling teachers to share good practice. The local authority supports you effectively, for example in ensuring that your evaluation of the school's work is accurate.

Areas for improvement from the previous inspection have been tackled head-on. Staff take great care over their planning to provide more opportunities for pupils to use their numeracy skills across a range of subjects, and evidence for this was seen in pupils' books. Staff are also provided with more opportunities to observe good teaching at Curdworth and in other good and outstanding schools in the consortium.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Records are detailed and of high quality. Monitoring by leaders, governors and the local authority show that policies are being rigorously implemented. Training ensures that teachers and support staff have up-to-date knowledge and remain vigilant.

School leaders know families well and can therefore target support or action swiftly and carefully. Vulnerabilities are identified and the small number of cases causing concern are rigorously tracked. Leaders are vigilant and check carefully the whereabouts of any absentees and leavers.

Parents are strongly of the view that the school looks after their children and keeps them safe. They are confident that any bullying or other unacceptable behaviour is dealt with effectively. School records confirm this.

Those pupils to whom I spoke overwhelmingly reported that they feel safe. They told me about the work they do in school on e-safety and bullying, for example. They explained that they cover specific safeguarding themes in assemblies, in lessons and in their work which is displayed around the school. Behaviour for learning in lessons is strong. As you and I walked around the school, I noted the

very strong work ethic evident in lessons where pupils were engaged and well behaved. In group sessions, pupils acted in a mature and sensible fashion. The pupils were a credit to you, your staff and their parents.

All policy documents are compliant, thorough and understood by staff and governors. The results of staff surveys reveal that staff have confidence in the leadership and management of the school to keep pupils safe. Correct recruitment checks have been carried out for staff, volunteers and governors.

Inspection findings

- In 2016, assessments for the small number of Year 6 pupils indicated that progress in reading and mathematics had slowed and was well below the national average. However, the rapid action taken by school leaders has reversed this decline. Work in pupils' books, and our classroom observations during the inspection, show that pupils are now making good progress in reading and mathematics. Attainment is rising and, in particular, many pupils are becoming very enthusiastic readers.
- Phonics, early reading, writing and mathematics are taught well in the early years and key stage 1 so that the vast majority of pupils reach the expected standard in these subjects by the end of Year 2.
- Writing in books shows clear evidence of progress over time across all year groups. There is strong evidence of the vast majority of pupils making good progress in writing. The school's good attention to teaching spelling, grammar and punctuation is paying dividends.
- The introduction of a new initiative to help pupils understand more clearly the purpose of their learning is also helping them to make better progress. Through this initiative, pupils now focus on a single learning target for any piece of work.
- Assessment information for 2016 indicated that the very small number of disadvantaged pupils were not making good progress when compared with other pupils nationally. Leaders and governors identified that this was partly linked to a decline in the quality of teaching in some classes. The introduction of a new staffing structure and evidence seen in pupils' work, particularly disadvantaged pupils, is already indicating that this decline has been addressed.
- Over time, the progress of boys has not matched that of girls. In 2016, by the end of Year 6, boys' progress overall in reading, writing and mathematics was in the bottom 10% of schools nationally. Leaders and governors have recognised this poorer performance and have in place new initiatives, for example providing more 'boy-friendly' books to read in all classes. The school's information about outcomes, including work seen in boys' books, shows that this is already having an impact on their progress compared with that of girls. For example, in a Year 3 and 4 class, boys were keen to share their thoughts about the text they were studying, proving they have a deeper understanding of the author's use of descriptive vocabulary. Some actions are at an early stage, but are beginning to show that differences in the attainment of boys and girls are diminishing.

- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities throughout the school is very small. The acting special needs coordinator (SENCo) ensures that identification of pupils with additional needs is rapid and that they receive the best support available from outside agencies and the school's team of teaching assistants. To further enhance this good practice, the acting SENCo is providing extensive training for teaching assistants to enhance further the impact they have on the progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- the development of teaching assistants' planning includes the right level of challenge for their targeted pupils of all abilities
- all staff take further steps to improve the quality of boys' literacy and numeracy skills.

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

Yours sincerely

Steven Cartlidge
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, the assistant headteacher and the acting SENCo. I also met with groups of pupils and three members of the governing body. I scrutinised school documents, including safeguarding checks, information about pupils' achievement and records of checks on the quality of teaching. I visited all classrooms with you to speak with pupils, look at their books, observe their learning and hear several pupils read. I examined child protection information. I took account of the 13 staff responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire and 27 parent responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and I also took account of the views of the 12 parents who texted me. There were no responses to the pupil questionnaire. I spoke to the local authority representative on the telephone.