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Mr David Johnson
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Johnson

Short inspection of Ettington Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 26 January 2016 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 2011.

This school continues to be good.

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

The school continues to be well led and managed. Parents spoken to agree. Last term, the assistant headteacher provided stability and clear direction as acting headteacher while governors carried out a rigorous recruitment procedure to appoint a new headteacher. You took up your post at the start of this year. Although very new to the school, you have already identified precisely where the school's strengths lie, and where further improvements are needed. You and your leadership team have used these findings to generate detailed action plans to raise both achievement and the quality of teaching further. Your evaluations are exceptionally honest and accurate. Inspection findings concurred entirely with the school's own information.

As the school website so accurately puts it, 'this is a school where everyone is valued and everyone is nurtured'. Leaders, staff and governors have successfully continued to promote the inclusive, welcoming nature of the school. All staff are dedicated to providing the highest levels of care for pupils, ensuring that pupils are tolerant and respectful to fellow classmates and adults alike. Pupils achieve well academically and

are taught to be responsible and thoughtful citizens. As a result, they are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Pupils enjoy school and parents describe Ettington primary as a 'great school'. As one parent said, 'if my son wakes up miserable in the morning, he always comes home happy from school as he loves it'. This is because lessons are fun and pupils play and work together harmoniously. As a small school, you and your staff have a detailed knowledge of every pupil. You use this knowledge exceptionally well to ensure that provision is closely tailored to meet the needs of all groups of pupils. As a result, they achieve well and reach standards which are well above average by the time they leave Year 6.

Over the last five years, pupils have continued to achieve well. Attainment in Key Stage 1 has risen in all subjects, especially in writing. Pupils in Key Stage 2 make good progress and standards continue to be above the national average in all subjects. Progress rates are, however, beginning to slow down, especially in mathematics. Leaders are aware of this and as a result have introduced intervention programmes which help support pupils who are at risk of falling behind. A greater focus has also been placed on pupils' reasoning and problem-solving skills. This increased level of challenge is ensuring that pupils develop mastery in mathematics and the ability to explain how they reach their answers. As a result, progress rates are again accelerating.

At the previous inspection, inspectors noted several strengths, including the extent to which pupils feel safe. Pupils continue to feel very safe at school and know how to keep themselves safe. They trust adults and are confident that if they have a problem, staff will help them sort it out. Attendance was also noted as a strength in the last inspection report. Over time, attendance has continued to be average or above, with the exception of 2015, where figures dipped below average. This was due to a higher than usual number of pupils in school having medical needs and needing time off for treatment or recovery from illness. Figures for this year already show that the school is back on track to be above average, as rigorous procedures are in place to check and track the absence of different individuals and groups.

Areas identified during the last inspection have been successfully addressed. Teachers provide greater levels of challenge during lessons and reshape activities to ensure pupils make good progress. As a result, the proportions of pupils reaching the higher levels at Key Stage 1 and 2 are above the national average, especially in reading and mathematics. Teachers provide helpful feedback and guidance to pupils so that they know how to improve their work. Teaching assistants have received training and are set targets alongside class teachers to ensure they too are held fully to account. They provide valuable support for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. Assessment and monitoring processes are undertaken by you and your leadership team and the information gathered is used successfully to identify where additional help or focus is needed. You are aware that further attention is needed to remedy some areas of weakness in pupils' writing, including their spelling, and that there is still work to be done to close the attainment gaps between disadvantaged pupils and others in the school.

Safeguarding is effective.

You, your staff and governors are extremely committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. This is made explicit on the school's website where the safeguarding policy is published on the front page so nobody can miss it.

All staff have received safeguarding training and leaders diligently follow safer recruitment procedures when appointing staff. The designated leader has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are effective and records are detailed and of high quality. All staff and governors have read the most recent guidance on 'Keeping children safe in education' and know what to do if they have a concern. Pupils have a very good awareness of e-safety because you and your staff place a high priority on this. Pupils know the dangers associated with using the internet and are clear that adding personal details to chat rooms or meeting strangers through the internet is dangerous. This is very important as many pupils talked to me about their use of I-messaging and other social media. They have a good awareness of different forms of bullying but know who to tell if a problem arises.

Inspection findings

- Although only recently appointed, as headteacher you have set a clear vision for the school and quickly identified areas for improvement. Staff are supportive of this vision, highly committed and dedicated. They work together as a united team to support each other and improve the quality of teaching. They have undertaken additional training, where necessary, to ensure they provide the highest standard of care and education for pupils at Ettington. For example, staff have undertaken dyslexia training so that they know how to support pupils with this difficulty. Parent views are extremely positive with the very large majority agreeing that their children feel safe, are happy and make good progress.
- Subject leaders make a significant contribution to improvements identified. They play a full and vital role in checking the quality of teaching in their respective subjects and assessing and supporting pupils' achievement. They look at data and the work in pupils' books, observe teaching and talk to pupils about their learning. This helps them determine how well pupils are progressing and where the strengths and areas for improvement lie in different subjects. Subject leaders undertake training to ensure that their skills and subject knowledge remain up to date and they also lead training for colleagues in school.
- Governors have a very detailed and accurate view of the school. They provide strong levels of support and challenge. They work closely with you and your leadership team and continue to be highly aspirational for the school. They visit school on a regular basis to carry out their own checks on teaching and learning. As 'link governors' they meet with subject leaders to check on the progress made in different subjects. This ensures they are well informed and able to ask probing questions at governor meetings. Governors have a good understanding of data and how well the school is performing compared to other schools nationally.

They also know the finer detail of the performance of all year groups, differences in subjects and pupil groups.

- Teaching continues to be good. Relationships are good in all classes. It is clear that pupils like their teachers and this is reciprocated. Teachers have a highly detailed knowledge of pupils and their abilities. They use the assessment information gathered to plan lessons which meet the needs of different groups, including the most- and least-able pupils. Regular pupil progress meetings identify pupils in need of additional help or challenge, and appropriate provision is made. Pupils collaborate well and communication and language development are strongly promoted through the use of 'talk partners'. Most teachers carefully check on groups and individuals during lessons and provide help where needed. For example, in a Year 1 lesson we saw an example of a pupil being reminded to use his phonics knowledge to help spell 'duck'. However, spelling prompts and support aids are not routinely available to help pupils, and as a result many make errors which are carried forward as they move through the school.

- Teacher assessments are accurate and were validated by the local authority in 2015 for each key stage. Books checked during our learning walk show that the school's marking policy is applied consistently. Teachers provide 'next step' pointers to show pupils how to improve their work further. Pupils respond to these comments and older pupils also self- and peer-assess their work. Pupils read well and enjoy reading from a wide range of books. They have frequent access to the school library and enjoy visits from authors. This helps promote their love of reading. Volunteers also ensure younger readers are heard read regularly.

- Children in the early years continue to make good progress. Good links exist with the on-site preschool and this ensures that the transition is smooth and children settle into school quickly. The new early years baseline confirms your own judgements that children join school with skills and knowledge which are typical for their age. Exciting lessons and a range of opportunities, both indoors and outside, help children to develop and build on their basic skills. As a result, the number of children reaching a good level of development is above average and there is a rising trend. Imaginative teaching strategies capture children's attention, for example the use of 'Mr Mole', the glove puppet, who watched to see how many phonics sounds the children knew and how rapidly they responded. However, a lack of phonics prompts in the classroom means that children do not always have the visual clues around them to help them with their early reading and spelling development. Children's learning journals also provide helpful sources of evidence. They show the range of activities and skills taught and provide leaders and teachers with a valuable record of progress made.

- Pupils' behaviour and personal development and well-being continue to be areas of strength. In lessons, pupils are attentive and demonstrate positive attitudes to their learning. During the inspection we observed their very high levels of concentration, collaboration and perseverance. Pupils understand and closely follow the school's behaviour policy. Older pupils readily take on additional

responsibilities, including running the school tuckshop to develop their mathematical and enterprise skills.

- There are only a small number of pupils in the school who are disadvantaged, or who have special educational needs, but all make good progress due to good teaching and the high-quality support they receive. However, your current assessment information shows that attainment gaps remain between disadvantaged pupils and others in the school. At the beginning of the inspection, it was quickly apparent that you have already identified this as a school priority and are taking effective action to address this.

- You and your staff have successfully created a happy and thriving school environment. Key values such as responsibility, truthfulness and respect, together with an exciting and imaginative curriculum, contribute well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. A range of activities, subjects and enrichment events ensure pupils love school and develop the physical, creative and academic skills needed for the next stage of their education. British values are promoted strongly and high-quality displays in classrooms and around school show the imaginative ways staff weave these into lessons. Examples of high-quality writing show the levels of understanding and empathy displayed by Year 5 and 6 pupils following discussions about Martin Luther King and the background of the Statue of Liberty. Pupils have learned about different cultures and people from other faiths. They welcome and accept everyone.

- The local authority provide light-touch support as they recognise that leadership is effective. They know how well the school is doing and provide guidance as needed.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- any remaining gaps between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils in the school are reduced
- teaching provides pupils with spelling strategies to support them with unfamiliar and everyday words.

Yours sincerely

Heather Simpson
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection I met with you and your assistant headteacher, who is also the designated lead for safeguarding, and other subject leaders. I also met with a group of governors and a group of pupils. In addition, I spoke to parents as they brought their children to school and took account of the 69 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), together with your own parent questionnaire responses. I also spoke to a representative of the local authority by telephone. Together, you and I visited all classrooms and spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at the work in their books. I observed pupils at playtime and spoke to them as they moved around the school. Documents and records relating to pupils' achievement, teaching, attendance and safeguarding were scrutinised during the inspection. The school improvement plan and leaders' own evaluation of performance were also taken account of.