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Janette Morris
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Dear Miss Morris

Short inspection of Crown Meadow First School and Nursery

Following my visit to the school on 1 November 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 June 2012.

This school continues to be good.

You and your leadership team have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have continued to set high standards for staff and pupils. As a result, pupils have continued to achieve well. Although a minority of parents have some concerns about the recent high staff turnover, you have managed the changes in staffing well. You and your leadership team monitor the performance of all teachers closely and you have ensured that those who are new to teaching are well supported so that they quickly gain the skills needed.

Pupils enjoy school and feel safe. They have a good understanding of key values, such as perseverance, and the principles which underline British values. For example, pupils have a good awareness about the importance of showing mutual respect for each other and they also have an increasing understanding of democracy. They know that voting for school council members affords them a say in school matters. Pupils are knowledgeable about other cultures and current affairs and talked to me enthusiastically about the American presidential elections and 'Brexit'.

You have successfully addressed the key issues raised at the previous inspection. You have ensured that boys and those who are the most able make consistently good progress in English. Attainment at the end of key stage 1 has remained above the national average and pupils make good progress. There is no discernible difference between the progress rates of boys and girls and the most able pupils

build well on their respective starting points. The proportion working at greater depth in reading and writing was above the national average in 2016. Together with your deputy headteacher, you have set out a clear and comprehensive school improvement plan. Appropriate priorities are formulated based on accurate analysis of assessment information and robust and regular monitoring of teaching and learning.

There remains work to be done in making better links between reading and writing in phonics teaching and improving the attendance of some pupils. Further work is also needed to improve the perceptions and views of a minority of parents. Although you act in the interests of pupils at all times, some parents feel that their concerns are not addressed and that communication between home and the school needs improvement. You and your governors are aware of this and are keen to work in partnership with parents and provide any information requested to those who have concerns.

Safeguarding is effective.

Within the school, a culture that safeguards pupils is well established. As the designated safeguarding leader you ensure that all staff and governors, including new members, are fully trained and know precisely what to do if they have any concerns about pupils. You seek advice and make referrals to the local authority where you feel additional support or follow-up is required. Visitors and volunteers are provided with safeguarding advice on arrival at the school and provided with badges and fire procedure information. You carry out rigorous safer recruitment checks to ensure that all those who work with children have been suitably vetted and that they have the necessary skills and qualifications needed.

Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe as this is taught well and regularly promoted in assemblies and through the curriculum. You address issues such as bullying as they arise and ensure that all pupils know who to talk to if they have worries. Governors also take an active role in checking on pupils' safety as they visit school and collect pupils' views. Pupils have a good awareness of internet safety and the different forms that bullying can take. They say that 'teachers help us feel safe'.

Inspection findings

- You and your deputy headteacher have a very clear understanding about the quality of teaching within the school. You have taken action to address underperformance and provide good levels of support to those who are newly qualified. Regular checks are carried out by you and your leadership team, and helpful feedback is provided to teachers to help them improve the quality of their teaching and raise achievement even further. You are not complacent, however, as you know that some aspects could be better, such as improving outcomes for the small number of disadvantaged pupils in the school. This has already been targeted as a priority in the school development plan.
- Other leaders in the school play an active and important role in overseeing

different subjects and key stages. They have a good awareness of assessment information and how well pupils are doing. They devise appropriate action plans in their respective areas and provide regular feedback to governors through subject reports. Accountability and shared leadership is therefore well established.

- Governors take their responsibilities seriously and consider different viewpoints before making decisions. While they approved the change of arrangements in mixing Nursery and Reception children together in the early years, they did not approve a proposal to introduce pupil massage as most parents were opposed to this. Governors have a wide range of experience and use this well to support and challenge you and your leadership team. A staff member from the middle school is a member of your governing body and this provides a strong link between the two adjoining schools. Governors are very reflective and have considered ways to improve their roles. For example, some governors visit classes and talk to pupils. Now governors are looking at ways to increase the range of these visits and the frequency of meetings with senior leaders.
- You and your leadership team introduced a new approach to teaching phonics in September 2015. This has had a positive impact on pupils' ability to break down new or tricky words and then blend the sounds together. Pupils who read to me were confident in using this approach. However, teachers do not consistently link the teaching of reading with writing. For example, children in Reception classes practise their writing skills but links with reading are not generally made. Conversely, pupils in Year 1 practise their reading skills but opportunities are not routinely provided to apply the sounds learned in their writing. This slows progress for these pupils in both reading and writing.
- Good attention is paid by teachers to promoting grammar, punctuation and spelling. Discrete exercises are used for pupils to practise these skills. Pupils' handwriting is neat and many use a cursive style. Pupils try hard with this aspect in order to achieve a 'pen licence' to write in ink. The standards of writing across the school are at least average and many pupils produce work which meets the criteria for working at greater depth. This is evidenced in work in their books and that displayed in classrooms. Progress is most rapid where teachers provide opportunities for pupils to write in different forms, for example letter writing, poetry, fiction or writing instructions. Writing is also practised well in other curriculum subjects, for example topic work and science. The same high-quality writing was noted in pupils' work in these areas.
- Mathematics is taught well. Pupils handle tricky problem-solving activities well and are becoming increasingly confident in providing explanations and reasons for how they reach their answers. Work is well matched to pupils' different abilities, including setting work at greater depth for those who are the most able. Additional resources and support are also provided for the less able pupils to ensure that they achieve well. Teachers regularly check on pupils during lessons and mark their books as they go, checking that they understand the work set.
- Children join the Nursery or Reception classes with skills and knowledge which are typical for their age. Adults provide stimulating and exciting activities to increase children's independence, confidence and early skills. Children settle

quickly and adapt to the routines set. Healthy eating is established from the outset and children visit the snack bar to collect fruit and milk, as and when required. Good use is made of both the outdoor and indoor learning areas which are secure and well maintained. Resources are readily available for children. Adults are suitably deployed to teach specific skills or question children to extend their language development and check their understanding.

- Outcomes at the end of key stage 1 continue to be above the national average. In 2016, a higher proportion of pupils were deemed to be working at greater depth compared to other pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils make good progress as they move through the school and leave Year 4 well prepared for the next stage of their education. There is good support for those who are disadvantaged and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, both in the classroom and in 'The Nest' where additional time is provided for those with social and emotional difficulties. Additional levels of challenge are provided for the most able pupils, including challenging reading texts and demanding problem-solving activities in mathematics. As a result, all groups of pupils achieve well.
- Pupils spoken to say that behaviour is good and that bullying is 'rare'. They do, however, say that there is occasional silly behaviour and some name-calling. Pupils are confident that where this occurs, it is dealt with effectively by staff. Records checked show that you record and monitor behaviour incidents well. Permanent and fixed-term exclusions are applied in accordance with the school's behaviour policy for serious incidents where warranted. Most pupils are polite and courteous. They socialise well together at breaktimes and have good manners when speaking with visitors.
- Pupils enjoy school and the attendance of most pupils is above the national average. Good systems are in place to track pupils' attendance and follow up on any absences. However, a small number of pupils, especially those who are disadvantaged or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, do not attend well enough. Consequently, their attendance is below average. Occasionally, pupils' absence is linked to medical needs, for example those who have education, health and care plans, but for others, their low attendance is having a negative impact on their achievement. In 2016, provisional assessment information shows that these pupils were below the national average in the Year 1 phonics check and below other pupils nationally in the Year 2 assessment tests.
- Parents' views are mixed. Of those parents who used Parent View to express their opinions, most were confident that their children are happy, safe and well looked after at the school. However, approximately one quarter would not recommend the school to other parents. In contrast to this survey, the school's own survey, carried out during parents evening in March 2016, presents a different picture. Out of 167 responses, 158 would recommend the school. Almost all views sought were positive about leadership and management and felt the school dealt with their concerns. Parents' main concern is the recent high turnover of staff and the lack of transparent communication between home and school. Many accept that staff changes happen but would like to be kept more informed. Although you provide regular newsletters and publish information on the school's website, you and your governors are keen to address this issue and

plan to discuss new ways to improve communication and improve relationships with the small number of parents who are dissatisfied. Previously, you have held parent workshops, parent forums and invited parents in to discuss their problems and this has largely been appreciated.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- reading and writing skills are taught in conjunction with each other and given equal importance in phonics teaching
- action is taken to improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities to help accelerate their progress
- communication and engagement with parents is improved so that the small minority of parents who are dissatisfied with the school feel their views are listened to and their concerns addressed.

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

Yours sincerely

Heather Simpson
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Lines of enquiry pursued during this inspection focused on:

- the achievement of all pupils, especially those in key stage 2
- how well phonics is taught
- how leaders monitor the attendance of different groups
- what behaviour is typically like
- the effectiveness of leadership at all levels, including governance
- the effectiveness of safeguarding procedures.

During the inspection, I met with you and members of your leadership team and governing body. You and your deputy headteacher accompanied me on visits to almost all classes in the school. During these visits I looked at pupils' work and spoke to pupils about their learning. I also spoke informally to pupils about behaviour and how they learn to keep themselves safe. I observed pupils' behaviour at breaktimes as well as in lessons. I heard a sample of pupils read from Year 1.

Additional information was provided through discussions with school governors. I looked at a range of school documents, including the checks on the suitability of staff to work with children and the school's information about pupils' achievement and attendance. I also reviewed the school's own evaluation of its work, together with the school development plan. I took account of parents' views through the 91 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, together with the school's own recent survey of parents' views. Further views were gathered from parents as they collected their children from school or through telephone discussions. Three responses were considered from the online staff questionnaire, together with views shared during meetings or informally around school.