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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Miss Debbie Sleep
Headteacher
Stroud Valley Community Primary School
Castle Street
Stroud
Gloucestershire
GL5 2HP

Dear Miss Sleep

Short inspection of Stroud Valley Community Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 23 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 February 2013.

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 because all staff, teaching and non-teaching, work together as a cohesive team to improve the school. Despite the recent absences of key members of staff, everyone has 'pulled together', including governors, to share the workload. As a result, you have made sure that learning has not been affected and most pupils have continued to reach their potential. The attention given to pupils' personal development and welfare ensures that they leave the school as mature and confident young people, able to articulate and express their views on a range of current affairs.

Relationships between staff and pupils in school are warm and friendly. The school ethos ensures that children and their families are valued equally with an individual emphasis on good outcomes for each pupil, socially as well as academically. The school values of 'Helpful, Trustworthy, Kindness, Bright, Friendly, Sense of Humour, Loyal, Respectful, Honest and Thoughtful' are collectively summarised on the school 'celebration tree' in the entrance area. One pupil summed this up well by stating, 'Everyone is different but it doesn't matter.'

Pupils, parents and staff are overwhelmingly positive about the strong and evident community spirit you have created and maintain. Pupils appreciate the help and support that teachers and classroom assistants give to them, and parents welcome the time that you and teachers freely give to talk through any concerns they have. You work closely with your families to ensure the best outcomes for the pupils, for

example through the provision of a dedicated parent support adviser who works with parents and acts as a support for the more vulnerable pupils.

Children enter the school with skills lower than those expected. The impact of the work through the whole of the school in 2016 resulted in broadly average standards in Year 6 in reading and writing, although mathematics was below these subjects. You acknowledge that too few pupils are reaching the higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics in key stage 1 and in mathematics at key stage 2.

You are working collaboratively with three other local primary schools to raise standards and provision for all pupils. As headteachers, you meet on a regular basis to prioritise areas for development and draw on the expertise of an external adviser to support your work. This collaborative partnership ensures that all staff and governors have access to expertise and are able to further develop their own practice.

You have taken steps to tackle the areas for improvement from the previous inspection, and much of this work is still ongoing. The first area for improvement was to improve achievement which was too low at key stage 1. You have taken appropriate action to do this. You have targeted support for the lower-ability pupils especially, by giving them a curriculum more appropriate to their needs and one that also enables them to be 'stretched'.

A second area for improvement was to improve the impact of subject leaders on raising attainment. You have implemented a new method for assessing pupils and tracking their progress that fits with the new curriculum. As a result, I found that school assessment information and discussions with leaders show that progress and attainment are now monitored more closely, with support given where needed.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding is taken extremely seriously in the school and the vigilance of the staff exemplifies the words in your policy statement that 'it could happen here'. Leaders have made certain that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of good quality. You know this because you have drawn on the expertise of a governor who has a professional background in child protection and the law to review safeguarding in the school. As a result, all staff understand their shared responsibility to keep children safe. They have taken part regularly in a range of training to keep their knowledge and skills up to date. You, as the main designated safeguarding lead, the deputy headteacher and the parent support worker complete additional training on a regular basis. You ensure that there is always someone in the school able to offer advice should it be needed.

Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe in using the internet. They demonstrated an appropriate knowledge of internet 'grooming' and their confidence in what they would do if they saw something on their computer that made them feel uneasy. Pupils are happy at school and say that there is no bullying, but if there was it would be 'dealt with swiftly'. They have complete

confidence in their teachers and classroom assistants being able to sort out any worries or problems they may have.

Inspection findings

- One of my lines of enquiry was to look at the current standard of phonics and how this impacts on reading standards, across the school, especially in key stage 1. The standards achieved by pupils in the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1 have been below average for the last three years. Although the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in 2016 rose from the previous year, it was still below average. You have carefully analysed the reasons why individual pupils did not achieve the expected standard. This resulted in a change in groupings and approach to teaching as well as refreshing the training of all staff. You monitor pupils in Year 2 to ensure that those that need it receive additional support to improve their reading and catch up quickly. Together we observed some effective learning of phonics in the Reception class and throughout key stage 1, which also shows the good impact these changes are having.
- I also reviewed pupils' reading. Although pupils' attainment in reading was below average at key stage 1, it was broadly average in 2016 at key stage 2. You and your reading leader have instigated the purchase of new books that better interest the pupils and at the same time develop their comprehension skills. The pupils from Year 3 and Year 6 who I heard reading were excited about the new books as they had been able to suggest authors. As one pupil said, 'I couldn't wait to get my hands on them.' Adults listen to pupils read regularly and provide them with the support they need to improve. You celebrate reading through a range of activities, including holding a 'book week' and giving out awards for reading. Overall, current pupils in Years 1 and 2 use their phonic skills well to read unfamiliar or difficult words. Your current assessment information shows that pupils make good progress in reading across key stages 1 and 2 and are acquiring the reading skills expected for their age.
- A second line of enquiry looked mainly at key stage 1 and pupils' attainment in writing and mathematics. From a joint review of writing, we found that lower- and middle-attaining pupils, including boys, make good progress. These pupils make particularly good progress in key stage 1, given their low starting points in the early years, to reach the standards expected for their age. They use a range of correct spellings and apply their knowledge of letters and sounds to read unfamiliar words. Pupils have a growing understanding of the features of different types of writing, for example how letters are structured. You identified weaknesses in the teaching of grammar, punctuation and spelling that resulted in some pupils at key stage 2 not making the progress they should in their writing in 2016. Through effective training, teachers are now more confident to tackle these errors in a more consistent way. As a result, for most pupils, their grammar, punctuation and spelling is improving, especially for those in key stage 1.
- The subject leader for English has introduced writing portfolios for assessing pupils' writing against age-related expectations. This strategy has helped staff to identify where the gaps are in pupils' knowledge and understanding. They use this information to increase opportunities for pupils to extend their writing across

the curriculum. This approach is also being shared with other local schools to aid writing moderation. Handwriting is improving because correct letter formation is taught from Reception and pupils are further encouraged through rewards for improved handwriting. A scrutiny of pupils' work in books and their keenness to write showed the positive impact this work is having in raising standards in writing throughout the school.

- Following analysis of results in 2016, you instigated professional development to raise the expectations of teachers across the school and to help them develop a fuller understanding of the changes in the mathematics curriculum. Increased book scrutiny, learning walks and meetings focusing on pupils' progress have resulted in positive changes. You have made changes to the way you assess pupils' learning. The school's assessment system now provides you and your staff with more detailed and accurate information on pupils' learning and progress. It also supports teachers in planning work and helps the pupils to better understand what their targets are.
- We also agreed to look at achievement in the early years foundation stage. There has been a change of leadership in this area since the previous inspection. Teachers are now making better use of early years assessment information to ensure that key stage 1 pupils make faster progress and to identify children for interventions at an earlier stage. This has raised staff awareness of children's abilities and developed an expectation that children will reach higher attainment levels. Teaching assistants are experienced in early years and contribute well to assessment and planning.
- My final line of enquiry was about attendance. Last year, pupils' overall attendance was above the national average. However, you have rightly continued to focus on reducing the high absence levels of some pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and for some disadvantaged pupils. This historical low attendance is now being rigorously addressed. Pastoral support provided by the school, for parents and pupils, is making a noticeable difference. This has led to the improvement in pupils' attendance for 2016/17 compared with the same period last year.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils use mathematical reasoning and problem-solving to help more pupils work at greater depth in mathematics
- subject leaders continue to focus their action plans on raising standards by setting clear challenges for key groups and individuals
- the school continues to develop and embed its new assessment system so that staff are able to use the regular and accurate information now produced to help more pupils reach age-related expectations.

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

Yours sincerely

Terry Mortimer
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, your deputy headteacher and other staff members. I also met with governor representatives, including the chair of governors. I also spoke with a representative from the local authority. There were 70 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 21 responses to the staff questionnaire. Parents' views were sought when they brought their children to school. We visited all the classrooms together, with your deputy headteacher, to observe pupils' learning and talk to them about their work. We focused on pupils' mathematics and English books, looking at a range of abilities. I listened to a number of pupils read. A wide range of documentation and information relating to your self-evaluation, school improvement planning, equalities, assessment, monitoring and evaluation, and safeguarding was also examined.