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6 October 2017

Mr Richard Fordham  
Headteacher  
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Bedfordshire  
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Dear Mr Fordham

### **Short inspection of Stopsley Community Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 14 September 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 2012.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

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

You have recently taken up the post of headteacher this autumn term. Prior to this, in the absence of a substantive headteacher during the summer term of 2017, you and the deputy headteacher ensured that a thorough handover took place to secure a smooth leadership transition. This has contributed towards continued improvement.

Stopsley Community Primary School is a welcoming school. Pupils are happy and polite. They are keen to share their learning and explain the activities they are doing in class. In all lessons observed, pupils engaged well and were motivated to learn. Teachers' planning ensures that the teaching of mathematics skills progresses across all year groups. There was evidence of this in lessons observed, where there was a clear progression in developing pupils' thinking skills in mathematics from year group to year group. Pupils use a range of resources to help them extend their thinking. For example, pupils in key stage 1 used toy farm animals to help them investigate different ways to find a total and write number sentences. Other pupils explored many ways to make a total using resources representing place value. Consequently, pupils are becoming increasingly confident when solving mathematical problems.

A recommendation in the previous inspection report was to accelerate the progress in English, particularly in speaking and listening, of pupils who are working below the expectation for their age. There has been a strong focus on writing and communication skills. The school's chosen programme for teaching reading and writing across the school allows pupils to imitate the key language they need for a particular topic orally before they try reading and analysing it. This is beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' achievement. This has ensured that pupils are more confident when they begin to write. Leaders' assessment information shows that pupils generally make good progress in reading and writing across the school. Teachers demonstrate high expectations and pupils' work is of a high standard. Presentation in pupils' workbooks, particularly in writing, is consistently good across all year groups. Pupils in the Reception class begin to write using cursive lettering and, by the end of Year 1, they are confidently and consistently joining their letters.

Leaders of mathematics and English have ensured that the impact of their monitoring has supported teachers in improving pupils' achievement in both subjects. However, you recognise that to raise achievement in other subjects, there is a need to further develop middle leaders in their subject leader roles to ensure that pupils are achieving equally well in all subjects. This work has already started and is a key priority for the school.

All parents I spoke with at the start of the day were positive about the school and the recent changes in leadership. One parent commented: 'My children are thriving at Stopsley Community Primary School and I have seen a vast improvement in the quality of the school since my son started school.'

All parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, said their children were happy at the school and pupils told me that they enjoy school.

Staff set high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Pupils behave well in class, at breaktimes and around the school. Leaders monitor behaviour and the school's behaviour policy ensures that there is consistency in expectations. Pupils take pride in their work and respect the school environment. Few incidents of poor behaviour were recorded last year.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders, including governors, have ensured that arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The leadership team has established a strong safeguarding culture throughout the school. All safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are well kept. All statutory checks on employees are undertaken. You have effective systems for staff to communicate concerns about pupils who may be at risk. Files are detailed, with a chronology, so that incidents, actions and next steps can be easily identified.

The designated leaders are meticulous in their monitoring of vulnerable pupils. The school's central logging system ensures that actions can be easily reviewed and followed up in a timely fashion.

Pupils told me that bullying is rare and they were able to speak to an adult in school if they were worried or had any concerns. Pupils are taught e-safety and are aware of some of the dangers of the internet and know how to protect themselves online.

### **Inspection findings**

- In order to ascertain whether the school remains good, I looked at how leaders had improved pupils' outcomes in key stage 1. This was because, in 2016, pupils' achievement information highlighted a decline in reading, writing and mathematics.
- You explained that many pupils were new to the school in key stage 1 in 2016. The school has ensured that reading and writing are a priority. Senior leaders have introduced teaching programmes in mathematics and English to support pupils who speak English as an additional language. In addition, you have engaged positively with parents and provided 'family learning' workshops to give parents confidence when supporting their children with their learning at home. These have proved to be very popular and are well attended. This has had a positive impact on pupils' outcomes in key stage 1. As a result, pupils' achievement, including that of disadvantaged pupils, has significantly improved, with the majority reaching the expected standard and more pupils reaching greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics.
- My second line of enquiry explored the way leaders track the progress pupils make, as 2016 progress information showed that some pupils were not making enough progress from their starting points.
- Senior leaders have developed effective systems and processes for identifying pupils who are at risk of falling behind and meeting the needs of individual pupils with appropriate support. The school's tracking systems are detailed. You are able to provide extensive information about the progress made by all groups of pupils and demonstrate how progress has improved over each half term in 2017. Senior leaders have weekly and termly meetings with teachers, the family worker and the special educational needs coordinator. These meetings identify pupils who are not making enough progress from their starting points. Leaders and teachers track pupils' progress precisely so that teachers can plan short, focused and immediate catch-up sessions to address any gaps in pupils' learning or to challenge pupils further. These are proving to be very effective.
- Although, in 2017, key stage 2 teachers' assessment of pupils' writing attainment indicates a slight decline since 2016, last year's pupils' work and the school's progress information show that pupils generally make good progress from their different starting points. Nonetheless, you and senior leaders have identified that more pupils across the school need to achieve at the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics.
- In 2016, some disadvantaged pupils in key stage 1 did not make the progress they should from their starting points in reading, writing and mathematics. These pupils did not reach greater depth, so this became my third line of enquiry. Disadvantaged pupils are tracked carefully through half-termly pupil progress

meetings and weekly meetings. Two teachers have taken on the additional role of pupil-premium 'champions' who work alongside other leaders responsible for vulnerable pupils. They monitor pupils' attendance closely and address any well-being concerns. Pupils' progress in lessons is closely tracked and focused support sessions are provided when necessary. Individual case studies and leaders' detailed information on achievement in 2017 show that pupils made better-than-expected progress. Pupils in key stage 1 performed better than their peers and other pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics.

- Attendance in 2016 was below average for all pupils, so this was my final line of enquiry. The school's attendance officer is vigilant in following up pupils' absence and raising any concerns with senior leaders. Class attendance awards and half-termly celebration assemblies are having a positive impact on attendance. Senior leaders have worked tirelessly with the local community, including the Traveller community, to raise the profile of attendance. The attendance officer offers support to families when needed. Leaders engage well with families and support pupils when they are not able to attend school. For example, the school provides distance-learning packs that pupils complete and return to school while they are away. Attendance has improved over the year and is now in line with national averages.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- a greater proportion of pupils achieve at greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics across the school
- the role of subject leaders is further developed, so that they contribute positively to improving pupils' outcomes in all subject areas.

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

Yours sincerely

Cindy Impey  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with you, senior leaders, staff and four governors and spoke with parents before the start of school.

I visited all classes. Last year's examples of pupils' work were scrutinised. I spoke with pupils and observed pupils' behaviour during activities and as they moved

around the classes.

A number of documents were reviewed, including the single central record of employment checks, the school's self-evaluation and pupils' assessment and progress information.

I also took account of the 29 responses from parents to the online Ofsted questionnaire, Parent View, 22 free-text messages from parents, 31 responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire and 38 responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire.