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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



28 February 2018

Mrs Jacqui Collier
Headteacher
Stawley Primary School
Appley Cross
Ashbrittle
Wellington
Somerset
TA21 0HH

Dear Mrs Collier

Short inspection of Stawley Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 1 February 2018, 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 July 2014.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

Since the last inspection, standards at the school have shown some decline. In 2017, the proportion of pupils working at the standards expected of them in key stage 2 was too low. In reading, writing and mathematics the proportion was significantly lower than that seen nationally. Through well-focused self-evaluation you are now addressing the academic challenges facing the school. Support from an outstanding school is helping you to secure improvements in particular areas such as the assessment of writing. As a result, strong and effective assessment procedures are evident. Subsequently, pupils' achievement in writing is rising. However, actions to accelerate pupils' progress in reading and mathematics are more recent and are not yet improving pupils' achievement enough.

Leaders undertake a variety of monitoring activities to check on the quality of teaching and learning. Teachers receive feedback on where they can make improvements. However, some feedback is 'broad brush' and lacks precision. Therefore, the lack of detailed information slows the pace of improvement in specific areas required. For example, in key stage 2, teachers do not match reading comprehension activities closely enough to pupils' abilities. This hinders pupils, especially the most able, from working at the high levels of which they are capable.

Governors hold the school to account well. The recently appointed chair of governors and the vice-chair of governors make regular checks to ensure that school leaders are working on the right aspects for improvement. Both ask challenging questions about standards across the school, demonstrating their strong drive to raise pupils' achievement.

Teachers are proud of their school and of the work they are doing to improve standards. This pride is felt across the community. This is clear from the overwhelmingly positive response to Parent View, the online inspection questionnaire, gathered as part of the inspection. Teaching assistants also play a valuable part in the life of the school. Leaders deploy them well to support pupils' learning, especially with the teaching of phonics.

Safeguarding is effective.

The governing body is effective in encouraging a positive safeguarding culture in the school. Training for safeguarding and child protection is regular and comprehensive, enabling staff and governors to fully discharge their duties. You make sure that all necessary checks are in place to confirm that those who work with children are suitable.

Pupils reported that they feel safe in school and know that they can share worries or concerns with any of the adults who work there. They report that there is very little bullying of any sort in school. Pupils talk with confidence about keeping safe when using new technologies and know that they must not give out personal information online.

Inspection findings

- When I visited, we agreed on four key lines of enquiry.
- My first key line of enquiry focused on the impact of teaching, learning and assessment on how rapidly pupils develop their mathematics skills.
- Leaders have recently revised their approach to teaching mathematics across the school. As a result, pupils demonstrate good skills when working with numbers. The strong focus on improving pupils' skills in problem solving and reasoning is beginning to have a positive impact. However, these skills are not yet fully developed. Consequently, pupils are not yet able to show deeper mathematical skills and understanding.
- You have improved the school's tracking systems to enable leaders to rapidly identify, and remedy, gaps between the rates of progress for specific groups of pupils. However, rates of progress for current pupils in mathematics continue to be variable across year groups and are not yet consistently good enough. Middle leaders' expectations of pupils' achievement in mathematics in Years 4 and 5 are not high enough.
- My second line of enquiry focused on the impact of leaders' actions to improve the achievement of the most able pupils. This was because at the time of your previous inspection higher-attaining pupils were not always appropriately challenged.

- The progress of the most able pupils is not rapid enough. As a result, too few achieve the high standards they are capable of in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2. Previous assessments of these pupils' attainment were insufficiently precise. Leaders have now improved the school's assessment procedures. Teachers use assessment to identify gaps in pupils' understanding of grammar and punctuation. However, they do not use assessment well enough to see where pupils have gaps in their understanding of spelling patterns. Consequently, too many pupils repeat their mistakes and their weaker spelling has a negative impact on the standard of their overall writing. However, the most able pupils in the current Year 6 are now making strong progress in writing and mathematics.
- My third line of enquiry was to ascertain the impact of leaders' actions to improve pupils' progress in reading and writing across key stage 1.
- Children in the early years get off to a strong start with their education. However, there was a dip in the number of pupils reaching the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check in 2017. Leaders are remedying historical weaknesses in pupils' reading skills in key stage 1. Current pupils in key stage 1, including the most able, are making good progress in reading comprehension because their work is suitably challenging. Pupils articulate their ideas clearly and justify their responses. As a result, pupils now read with greater confidence, expression and stamina. Most Year 1 pupils are already working at the standards expected of them in reading.
- Pupils' writing in key stage 1 has steadily improved. They use punctuation, phonics in spelling and grammar accurately. Consequently, most Year 2 pupils are currently writing at the standards expected of them. However, some aspects of writing development could be strengthened further, for example ensuring that pupils are more accurate in their spelling and improve the presentation of their writing.
- My final line of enquiry explored why the most recently published figures showed pupils' attendance was not good enough and indicated persistent absence was a weakness.
- You have rightly made improving attendance a key priority this year. Leaders and staff emphasise the importance of coming to school every day and pursue the reasons for pupils' absence vigorously. The tenacity of you and your team is paying off. The attendance of pupils across the school has risen and is now better than in similar schools nationally.
- The high rate of persistent absence was specific to the last academic year. It was caused by the health and welfare of some pupils with complex needs. Considerably fewer pupils than previously are now frequently absent.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teaching enables pupils across key stage 2 to develop fully their mathematical thinking and understanding

- most able pupils make more rapid progress so that they reach the high standards of which they are capable, particularly in mathematics, across the school
- pupils' technical accuracy in spelling is consistently high throughout the school, in line with the expectations of the national curriculum.

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

Yours sincerely

Susan Costello
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I spoke to you and the senior teacher. I met with two governors, including the chair of the governing body. I also spoke to an external adviser from the local authority. We visited lessons across the school. Together, we looked at a sample of books from all year groups.

I looked at a range of documentary evidence, which included safeguarding records, risk assessments and records concerning pupils' behaviour. I explored how you record your pupils' achievement. I had a discussion with a group of pupils to gather their views of the school and their learning. I listened to a group of pupils read.

I also considered the 28 responses to the Parent View online survey and the nine responses to Ofsted's staff survey.