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Rebecca Smith
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Dear Rebecca Smith

Short inspection of St Giles-on-the-Heath Community School

Following my visit to the school on 24 January 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 July 2013.

This school continues to be good.

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

You took up your post in September 2014, after the previous inspection. You have developed a thorough understanding of the school's strengths and areas it still needs to work on. This has enabled you to devise a clear set of priorities to improve the school further. You have very good knowledge of your pupils and have a wealth of information about their prior attainment and particular needs at your fingertips. You are ably supported in your drive for school improvement by effective middle leaders who share your understanding of what the school needs to do next. All staff at the school are working together well as a team to promote the educational futures of all pupils.

Governors also have a secure and developing understanding of the school. They are proactive in their monitoring. They use training in governance effectively to develop their skills in analysing the strengths and areas for development of the school. They provide you with good support but also a strong level of challenge, especially around outcomes.

Since the last inspection, you and other leaders have addressed the areas for improvement that the report identified. For example, the most able writers make better progress now, although there is still work to be done to improve the progress of all pupils in writing.

Parents are very happy with the education that their children receive. All those who responded to the online survey, Parent View, would recommend the school to another prospective parent. They clearly believe that their children are happy, safe and well cared for while at the school. My observations around the school and my conversations with pupils showed them to be cheerful, polite and focused well on their learning.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. There is a well-developed culture of vigilance built around the fact that in a small school all the adults know all the pupils well. This puts them in a good position to spot whether a child is upset or needs help. As a result, children are safe, as all parents agree.

The single central register of checks meets the requirements. All staff and governors are familiar with the contents of the latest guidance issued by the Department for Education, 'Keeping children safe in education', September 2016. All staff are trained to the appropriate level, including the designated safeguarding leads.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry related to the progress made by pupils in key stage 2 in writing. In the 2016 national curriculum assessment in writing, pupils made progress at a rate that was slower than the national average. School leaders and governors have analysed the reasons for this outcome and drawn up effective plans to address it. For example, there is a renewed focus across the school on the importance of accurate spelling. As a result of the leadership's efforts, the progress of current pupils in key stage 2 is stronger than it has been in the past. The work in their books shows that pupils of all abilities have made good progress since September. They are successfully developing the knowledge, understanding and skills that underpin success in writing.
- The second key line of enquiry related to middle-ability pupils' performance in mathematics in key stage 1. In 2016, these pupils did not attain at the expected levels in mathematics. Again, the school's leadership has taken effective action to address this situation. Those pupils who did not reach the expected standard at the end of Year 2 are catching up quickly. They are supported by programmes that address gaps in their knowledge and develop a greater fluency in their mathematical skills. As a result, they are making quicker progress and enjoying the experience of succeeding in mathematics. Pupils who are currently in key stage 1 are making similarly good progress.
- A third line of enquiry was the use of the pupil premium. The school has a relatively small number of disadvantaged pupils in each year group. This makes generalisations about their performance as a group difficult. Nonetheless, the scrutiny of the work of individual disadvantaged pupils in English and mathematics shows that they are making good progress from their starting points. Some more-able disadvantaged pupils are making strong progress. The school's analysis of its use of the pupil premium, however, needs to improve so

that the precise impact of spending choices can be more clearly evaluated.

- The fourth line of enquiry related to the early years provision in the school. Outcomes for pupils in the early years improved in 2016, with the proportion of children reaching a good level of development at the end of Reception now broadly in line with the national average. This is a result of changes made to the organisation and delivery of the curriculum to the Reception class within the early years foundation stage unit, which caters for pupils from ages two to five. These changes have allowed for more focused teaching of phonics, reading, writing and mathematics to the older children. The work of children currently in the Reception class shows that they are broadly making good progress towards their early learning goals.
- The final line of enquiry concerned attendance. The school has historically had low rates of absence and persistent absence. This remains the case and children are keen to come to school. Rates of persistent absence so far this year are particularly low when compared to national figures.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils make faster progress in writing at key stage 2
- levels of attainment improve in mathematics at key stage 1, especially for middle-ability pupils
- analysis of the use of the pupil premium is sharper so that leaders and governors have a clearer insight into the impact of this additional funding.

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

Yours sincerely

Stephen Lee
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held an initial meeting with you to establish the key lines of enquiry for the inspection. We also met at other times during the day. I also had discussions with other school leaders. I met with members of the local governing body, including the chair, and spoke to a representative of the local authority by telephone. Jointly with you and other leaders, I undertook observations in lessons and scrutinised work in pupils' books. During these activities I took the opportunity to talk to pupils about their learning and their experiences of the school. I examined documents provided by the school; these included the school's own self-evaluation and the school development plan. I took into account the 13 responses to the online survey of parental opinion, Parent View.