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Mr K Wright
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Wright

Short inspection of St Peter's Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 21 November 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 January 2014.

This school continues to be good.

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

Speaking with staff, parents and carers, it became clear how well staff know each child, both as a pupil and as an individual. Parents told me that staff 'go the extra mile' in meeting pupils' needs. Inspection evidence confirms this view. You welcome pupils into the school at times other than the normal points of transfer. Staff then overcome any obstacles to learning so that new arrivals can focus on their studies and begin to make academic progress. Teachers use their detailed knowledge of what pupils can already do to plan work that provides a suitable level of challenge.

You have dealt with the recommendations made at the time of your previous inspection. Weaknesses in teaching have been addressed. Funds to support disadvantaged pupils are now used effectively to ensure better progress for these pupils.

Teachers set high expectations in the classroom. Work is well paced and tasks are ambitious. Teachers and pupils show a good understanding of subject-specific vocabulary and use terms appropriately. For example, in a Year 5 class, pupils talked with confidence about the wide range of techniques through which writers could enhance their descriptions. Teaching assistants make a skilful contribution to pupils' learning, often leading extended sessions for particular groups at the direction of the class teacher. Leaders check regularly on the quality of teaching and, during our observations, leaders were able to point to the improvements that

teachers have made in response to the feedback they had been given. Leaders' views on the teaching that we observed accorded well with mine.

Pupils respond very well to the tasks that they are set. In the lessons we observed, their behaviour was of the highest order. In the early years, staff work very effectively to engage the children's interest and ensure that they sustain their concentration. Almost all the workbooks that I scrutinised were well presented. Pupils told me that they appreciated the school's rewards for good work and behaviour. They said that during breaktimes they play happily together. There is a good range of equipment on the playground for pupils to enjoy. Pupils' attendance is above the national average.

According to provisional information, attainment at the end of key stage 2 improved markedly in 2018. In general, however, pupils' achievement in recent years has been rather lacklustre. You have responded by adopting commercial schemes to support teachers' planning. Leaders have implemented and supported these curriculum changes in a considered way. The school's achievement information and our scrutiny of pupils' workbooks showed that, overall, current pupils make strong progress in English and mathematics, and they achieve well in other subjects too.

Leaders encourage staff to learn from each other and to use each other's strengths in planning the curriculum. Staff have made occasional visits to other schools to check on the judgements they make about pupils' work and to look at different approaches to teaching. The school has recently entered into a soft federation with the secondary school in the town and two other local primary schools. This is an arrangement through which a school retains its own unique identity but benefits from supportive collaboration with partner schools. Leaders and governors understand the opportunities that the federation offers for learning more extensively from best practice, and are looking to develop opportunities to learn from, and contribute to, the work of the federated schools.

Assessment is a strength of the school. Leaders monitor pupils' achievement closely and frequently. They check on the progress of groups of pupils, such as disadvantaged pupils, boys and girls. Leaders use the information to identify those pupils who are at risk of falling behind, and to plan further support. Pupils benefit from the detailed feedback that they receive, both from their teachers and from their peers.

Staff work very effectively with parents to engage their help in supporting their children's learning. In the early years, parents frequently contribute their observations of what children have learned at home to children's learning journeys. Older pupils' reading records show that pupils read regularly to family members. Leaders invite parents into school to explain how teachers approach a particular topic. The school's website displays up-to-date information about what pupils are learning, and explains how parents can help. You wisely recognise that not all parents have the same opportunities to contribute to their children's learning and you support these parents where possible.

Safeguarding is effective.

The staff's detailed knowledge of the pupils and of the local community is the foundation of a strong culture of safeguarding. Leaders have made sure that staff are thoroughly trained to identify the symptoms of any problems that pupils may face, and are alert to signs that they may not be safe. There is no sense of complacency. The school's records show that when risks to pupils' safety arise, leaders work effectively with parents and other agencies to protect children. When leaders do not receive a prompt and satisfactory response, they persist until they know the pupil is safe.

Pupils told me that they feel entirely safe in school. They said that bullying occurs very rarely, if at all. Pupils were able to recall, in good detail, the advice that they have received on how to stay safe online, and said that they had changed their own practice as a result. They also spoke of learning about road safety, and the school's insistence that they learn to swim.

Inspection findings

- In the past two years, the proportion of Year 1 pupils who have met the expected standard in the phonics screening check has been below the national average. You attributed the underachievement to inconsistencies in the teaching of phonics. This academic year, teachers have implemented a new structured scheme for the teaching of phonics and improvements are now clear. I observed lively, pacy teaching of phonics which secured the interest of the whole class. Teachers combine the teaching of reading and writing, and use a variety of methods to reinforce pupils' phonics knowledge. The older pupils who read aloud to me were able to use their phonics strategies to work out unfamiliar words. Pupils also demonstrated an interest in, and love of, books.
- Pupils benefit from a curriculum that is broad, imaginatively designed and is effective in engaging their interest in learning. Teaching in English and mathematics addresses a suitably wide range of topics, including geometry and data handling. Pupils told me that they enjoy a wide range of opportunities in music and in physical education. Each year, a designated week introduces pupils to different creative arts. Pupils have the opportunity to influence their own curriculum. During the inspection, younger pupils' studies were including information about Africa at their own instigation. Leaders and governors ensure that pupils learn about religions and cultures other than their own. Pupils and parents told me how much they appreciate a rich programme of extra-curricular activities, including team sports, yoga, dancing, musical activities and a gardening club.
- You have evaluated thoroughly the school's expenditure of the pupil premium in 2017/18, and used the analysis to plan support for disadvantaged pupils for the current academic year. You concluded that the school's strategies have increased the progress of most disadvantaged pupils, so that they are making stronger progress than they have done in the past. Inspection evidence confirmed this. Often, disadvantaged pupils join the school with additional needs. We discussed how, in these circumstances, the school prioritises their social and behavioural

needs, and leaders showed how, in time, this has led on to better academic progress.

- In general terms, leaders are skilled at checking on the impact of their actions to improve the school. They have, for example, used lesson observation, work sampling and the analysis of pupils' achievement to judge the effectiveness of the new approaches to teaching phonics and mathematics. You have identified priorities based on your analysis of pupils' outcomes. You have informed governors of both the outcomes and the priorities. However, school improvement plans do not have the timescales and specific measures of success that would readily enable governors and others to hold leaders to account for their implementation.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they make timely and effective use of the federation to learn from strong practice
- improvement plans identify measures of success and timescales that allow governors and others to judge their impact on improving the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Martin Spoor
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, you were out of school under arrangements made for your phased retirement. I therefore met extensively with the head of school, with other leaders and with governors. I also held informal conversations with other members of staff. I spoke by telephone with a representative of the local authority. I observed learning, including the teaching of phonics, English and mathematics. I conducted almost all observations jointly with senior leaders. I listened to pupils in Year 3 reading aloud. I scrutinised disadvantaged pupils' work from the current academic year. I met with a group of pupils to gather their views, and spoke informally with several more. I spoke with parents at the start of the school day. I observed pupils' behaviour during lessons, at social times and when they moved around the school.

I took account of the 32 recent responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, including comments made using the free-text service. I also considered the 15 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.

I scrutinised a wide range of documents, both electronically and on paper, including: the school's evaluation of its own performance and its plans for improvement; records of governors' meetings; records showing how leaders monitor the quality of teaching; policies; curriculum plans; and records of pupils' achievement, attendance and behaviour. I looked in detail at records that show how the school keeps pupils safe.