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Mr Alex Davies
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Dear Mr Davies

Short inspection of Stretton Sugwas CofE Academy

Following my visit to the school on 29 January 2019, 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 2014.

This school continues to be good.

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

Your clear vision and strong leadership have been central to the ongoing success of the school. In September 2018 you became executive headteacher across another school. Despite this additional responsibility, you are still highly visible among pupils, staff and parents. Since the previous inspection, you have worked closely with governors to expand the school. You secured funding for a new classroom and a new building so that you could increase the number on roll, start wrap-around care and a new pre-school. These changes have enhanced the educational offer for the community.

A sense of family permeates the school. This is underpinned by your school motto, 'Each bee plays a part in the hive.' You have cleverly woven the theme of 'bees' into the life of the school. For example, the school keeps its own bees to produce honey and each class is named after a type of bee. Pupils understand that they are part of a team and that their individual behaviours matter. Typical views from parents during the inspection showed that they really appreciate the family feel of the school and how staff understand pupils' individual needs. One comment typified this view: 'Staff look for opportunities to help children grow. They recognise individual gifts and talents, particularly in sport and music.' Pupils are well cared for and, as a result, are happy and enjoy coming to school.

There has been a positive response to the areas for improvement outlined at the

previous inspection. You have ensured that responsibilities are distributed among other leaders in the school. Leaders feel empowered and make an effective contribution to school improvement. The analysis of assessment information is a noticeable strength. Leaders work closely with staff to analyse pupils' attainment and evaluate how well they are doing on their journey through school. Pupils who require additional support are identified quickly. Checks carried out on the quality of teaching are not as effective as they should be. Sometimes, staff do not receive sufficiently focused feedback on how to improve their classroom practice.

You have ensured that pupils' grammar, punctuation and spelling skills have improved since the previous inspection. Explicit and effective teaching of spelling has helped pupils to apply their spelling more accurately into longer pieces of writing. The whole-school approach to the teaching of writing is having a positive impact on pupils' enjoyment of writing and their ability to write at length. The teaching of mathematics is not as effective as it should be. Sometimes pupils are not provided with a sufficient level of challenge, particularly in key stage 1.

Pupils' personal development is extremely well catered for through the wide-ranging enrichment programme. Pupils enjoy playing music, sport and attending a broad range of extra-curricular clubs. The provision for physical activity and sport is particularly diverse. Pupils receive opportunities to take part activities such as cross-fit, archery and climbing. Pupils were also proud to share with the inspector that they have won a local debating competition for three consecutive years.

Leaders and staff have a good understanding of pupils' individual needs. You have appointed a learning mentor who provides additional support for pupils, including for pupils from service families. The special educational needs coordinator has worked tirelessly to ensure that pupils who have complex needs receive appropriate support through the provision of an education, health and care plan. Furthermore, through the introduction of pupil passports, staff have a good understanding of how to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that all the arrangements for safeguarding are fit for purpose. The designated safeguarding leads follow up concerns tenaciously. They make referrals to the local authority in a timely way. Record-keeping is thorough. The safeguarding governor carries out effective checks to ensure that leaders are adhering to their statutory responsibilities. High-quality training ensures that staff have a clear understanding of their responsibilities.

Safety is taught well through the curriculum and through the provision of wider opportunities. As a result, pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe. Your own 'Bee-Safe' programme has helped pupils to be clear about how to stay safe on the internet. Older pupils are clear about the dangers associated with social media and games that are not age appropriate. You also invite in visitors such as, the police and the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, to strengthen important safety messages to pupils.

Inspection findings

- The work in pupils' books across key stage 2 demonstrates that they make good progress over time. At the end of key stage 2 in 2018, pupils' attainment was high and progress was strong in reading, writing and mathematics. Teaching in upper key stage 2 provides pupils with a particularly high level of challenge. For example, in mathematics and reading comprehension pupils carry out challenging tasks that enable them to apply their knowledge and think deeply about their learning.
- You have ensured that the curriculum is continually reflected upon and refined. The curriculum plans carefully consider the subject content and experiences that pupils will receive. Pupils in key stage 2 spoke positively about their learning in the wider curriculum. They enjoy the practical nature of their science lessons and carrying out investigations. Pupils' books show that their scientific skills, knowledge and understanding develop well. They are also highly motivated by their physical education lessons.
- In key stage 1, the proportion of pupils attaining the expected standards in English and mathematics have been above the national average for several years. Teaching in this phase of the school is effective and pupils progress well. However, expectations of what pupils can and should do in mathematics are not always high enough. When this occurs tasks lack challenge, particularly for the most able pupils.
- Over the last three years, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check has been broadly in line with the national average. Staff assess pupils' progress in phonics regularly and clearly identify pupils who are require additional support. Pupils are organised in groups appropriately matched to their ability. Some of the phonics teaching is precise and makes sure that pupils learn sounds accurately and efficiently. However, this is not consistent across all the groups. Further training is required to make sure that support staff's subject knowledge is of a consistently high standard.
- The quality of leadership and provision across the early years is good. The early years leader uses assessment information to identify where children need further support. For example, some pupils have low levels of literacy on entry. Consequently, there has been a successful focus on developing children's language and writing.
- You started the new pre-school in September 2018 and it is proving successful. Numbers are growing and the classroom environment has been very well set up. The early years leader and the pre-school manager work in close partnership and make sure that there is consistency in provision across the early years. For example, both the pre-school and Reception use the same system for recording and assessing children's work.
- The governing body and trustees provide effective challenge and support to you and other leaders. Governors know the school well and are forward thinking. They have worked closely with you, to open the new pre-school and to put in place a new classroom, to grow the school.
- Your self-evaluation and improvement plan clearly identify appropriate priorities

for the school. You have a good track record of improving weaknesses. For example, at the end of key stage 2 a few years ago, not enough pupils were attaining the higher standard in mathematics. You and the deputy headteacher put in place successful strategies, and in 2018 the proportion attaining the higher standards rose above the national average. The checks that leaders make on the quality of teaching are not as rigorous as they should be. Sometimes, feedback is not focused enough to help individual staff to know exactly how to improve.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- there is a sufficient level of challenge in key stage 1 mathematics, particularly for the most able pupils
- support staff's subject knowledge in phonics is of a consistently high standard
- better-quality feedback is given to staff so that they know exactly how to improve their classroom practice.

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

Yours sincerely

Matt Meckin
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, several other leaders and five governors. I spoke to pupils informally and formally. We made short visits to eight lessons and looked at a range of pupils' books. I spoke to parents at the start of the day and considered 40 free-text responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I also considered the responses from Ofsted's online questionnaires for pupils and staff.