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Mrs Kelly Vaughan
Headteacher
Pool Hayes Primary School
Bridgnorth Grove
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Dear Mrs Vaughan

Short inspection of Pool Hayes Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 13 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 February 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. This is to the credit of the governors, senior leaders and the established staff, who have continued to drive the school forward throughout changes in staffing and leadership.

You were appointed on 1 January 2018. In a short space of time you have formed an accurate view of the school's performance. You have got to know the staff, the pupils and families very well. The great majority of parents spoke very positively about the school. They particularly value the information provided in weekly newsletters and they say that staff are dedicated and caring. Nevertheless, a minority of parents expressed concerns about the effectiveness of home-school communication and the uncertainty caused to their children by staff changes.

The school's core vision is for staff, pupils and families to work together and 'Always inspire, challenge, and learn'. This underpins all that the school does. Staff plan activities to engage and inspire pupils across all national curriculum subjects. For example, pupils talk enthusiastically about science, art, physical education and topic work. During the inspection, they were keen to tell me about the recent visit from local Olympic medallist, Kristian Thomas. Pupils' comments include: 'If you want to do something you have to be serious about learning and about your fitness and diet. It's not always easy but you've got to keep trying and never give up.' This is an example of the positive attitudes to learning that are evident across the school.

At the previous inspection leaders were asked to ensure that high-quality teaching is consistent across the school. Since then there have been a number of staff changes, including a new deputy headteacher, who has played a significant role in driving school improvement. Subject leaders are now accountable for continually improving the quality of teaching and learning and the use of assessment. Leaders have introduced effective systems for checking pupils' progress in all subjects. This includes half-termly pupil progress meetings, visits to lessons and regular checks on work in pupils' books. Leaders use this information well to set development points for teachers to further improve the impact of teaching on pupils' learning. However, you recognise that there is further work to be done to ensure that high-quality teaching is consistent across all classes and for all ability groups.

Also at the previous inspection, leaders were asked to ensure that pupils have more opportunities to write extended pieces of work when learning in different subjects. You have fully addressed this. The attractive displays around the school and in pupils' books, such as biographies of famous people, letters to the British Museum and reports in history and geography, are a testimony to this. At the end of Year 6, in 2017, the proportion of pupils who reached greater depth in writing was above the national average.

Your records show that teaching assistants make a strong contribution in helping pupils to achieve well. These valuable members of staff have benefited from effective training, which they put to good use when working with different groups of pupils. They value the time that they have to discuss planning with teachers and review pupils' learning.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You ensure that a strong safeguarding culture is at the heart of the school. You and the governors recently organised an external review of safeguarding. You acted swiftly on the recommendations. You have expanded the safeguarding team and increased the level of staff training. All staff, including lunchtime staff, are clear about how to identify and report any concerns about pupils' safety and well-being.

Your safeguarding records are well organised and detailed. You are vigilant in checking pupils' attendance. The family attendance officer is relentless in her determination to follow through every concern. She works closely with the local authority's education and welfare office. You are determined to provide the right support for families to ensure that pupils are safe. Your records show that pupils' attendance has improved when compared to the same period last year. There has been a significant reduction in the number of pupils who are persistently absent from school when compared to the same period in 2017.

Pupils talk about assemblies and lessons that teach them to stay safe and recognise when they are at risk. They discuss the risks of working online in a mature and informed way. They are proud of their 'safety posters' that are on display around the school. These help to ensure that pupils' safety is always in mind.

Inspection findings

- In 2017, at the end of Year 6, the proportion of pupils who achieved the higher standards of greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics was above the national figures. Leaders and the governing body are rightly proud of this.
- However, at the same time, some lower- and middle-ability pupils made slower progress across key stage 2 and did not reach the expected standards. My main line of enquiry for this inspection was to find out what you are doing to ensure that pupils of all abilities make the best possible progress in writing and mathematics.
- Leaders have introduced effective assessment systems to ensure that teachers are sharply focused on pupils' prior attainment. Your assessment records show that, across the school, more middle and lower-ability groups are working at the standards expected for their age in writing and mathematics. This is not yet consistently the case across all classes and all subjects. You acknowledge that this remains an area for further improvement.
- In mathematics, pupils are provided with frequent opportunities to use and apply what they know in mathematics to solve everyday problems. Year 6 pupils spoke enthusiastically about the challenges in 'active maths' sessions. During the inspection, they were applying their knowledge of geometry to recognise angles and classify shapes in the playground. These activities encourage curiosity and confidence in mathematical thinking and reasoning. As a result, more pupils, particularly those who do not find mathematics easy, are mastering basic mathematical skills and developing a greater depth of understanding.
- In writing, you have identified a need to improve the teaching of spelling, punctuation and grammar. Teachers and teaching assistants value the additional training that leaders have organised for this aspect of writing. The subject leader continues to work to ensure that pupils are encouraged to apply their technical skills when writing in different subjects. She works closely with the local authority assessment team and is well equipped to continue to drive improvements in this area.
- Another line of enquiry for this inspection related to the curriculum. Leaders have developed a curriculum that motivates pupils and challenges their learning. You have introduced schemes to support teachers' planning and ensure that pupils make better progress across the key stages. Subject leaders relish the opportunity, not just to raise pupils' achievement, but also to inspire a love of learning in their subjects. They are successful in creating an exciting and challenging curriculum for pupils.
- The school's self-evaluation document provides an accurate summary of the school's strengths and areas for development. Improving the achievement of lower and middle-ability pupils has rightly been, and remains, a top priority. However, you agree that the school improvement plan requires more clarity about actions, targets and timescales. This will enable you to evaluate the impact of your improvement actions and identify what is working well and what needs to be changed.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the school improvement plan contains clear priorities, precise targets and milestones so that leaders can easily evaluate the impact of improvement actions and identify what is working well and what needs to be changed
- high-quality teaching is consistent across all classes, especially for middle- and lower-attaining pupils.

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

Yours sincerely

Marilyn Mottram
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, the deputy headteacher and other leaders. I also met with the chair of the governing body and one other governor. I had a telephone conversation with a local authority representative. I spoke with pupils informally during the day. I made short visits to classrooms with you and your deputy headteacher. We reviewed samples of pupils' work as well as the school's assessment systems and curriculum information. I analysed a range of school documents including the school's self-evaluation, the school improvement plan and documents relating to safeguarding. I spoke to parents at the beginning of the school day. I took account of 12 responses by parents to Ofsted's online survey and 29 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire, Parent View. I also looked at information relating to pupils' attendance.