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Mrs Penny Lyall
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Lyall

Short inspection of Hodnet Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 28 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 November 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 the post of substantive headteacher in September 2018. Prior to this, you were deputy headteacher and then acting headteacher. You have made further appointments to strengthen the leadership team since September, including a permanent deputy headteacher.

Leaders and governors share your drive and commitment to ensure that pupils experience a broad and balanced education that allows them to develop as well-rounded young people. All staff place importance on pupils' well-being as much as their academic success. As a result, pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education by the time they leave Year 6.

While there are improvements over time, pupils do not attain as well in writing as they do in reading and mathematics at the end of key stage 1. You ensure that plans for improvement include appropriate actions to increase the proportion of pupils who attain the expected and greater depth standard in writing by the end of Year 2.

Pupils enjoy coming to school. They told me that learning is exciting because topics are interesting. Pupils explained that their learning is varied. For example, they talked enthusiastically about planning and carrying out experiments in science, and about producing artwork in the style of Stone Age man. Pupils appreciate opportunities to work outdoors in the beautiful school grounds and to go on visits to

support their understanding of what they are learning about. For example, pupils in Years 5 and 6 visited the National Space Centre as part of their work on outer space. Younger pupils visited Wroxeter, as part of their topic on Romans. In addition, pupils are proud of their extra responsibilities including those of house captains, school councillors, librarians and eco-warriors.

The parents I spoke to during the inspection and those who responded to Ofsted's questionnaire, Parent View, are very positive about the school. All agreed that their children are happy to come to school, where they are safe and learn well. Several parents praised leaders for bringing about stability since September 2018. In addition, many parents spoke of the approachable staff and the 'community spirit' of the school.

Governors are proud to be part of the school and they have an accurate understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement. They make regular visits to the school to find out for themselves what they have been told by school leaders. Governors understand their role in overseeing and monitoring the effectiveness of the school's safeguarding procedures.

At the last inspection, leaders were asked to further improve the quality of teaching. Leaders check the quality of teaching and learning each half term. Teachers appreciate the detailed feedback they receive about what they do well and what could be improved. Your monitoring evidence shows that the quality of teaching is strong throughout the school. Leaders were also asked to ensure that pupils in key stage 2 had a good grasp of the skills of spelling, punctuation and grammar. This has been successfully addressed. Over the last two years, the proportion of pupils who attain the expected and higher standard in the grammar, punctuation and spelling test at the end of key stage 2 has been above the national average. Finally, leaders were asked to make better use of their reviews of pupils' progress. You ensure that termly reviews of pupils' progress are rigorous and that the focus is on how well pupils are building upon what they already know and can do. Teachers share your high expectations about the progress that pupils can make, and swift action is taken to support pupils who are at risk of falling behind.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. All staff have child protection training and you share updates regularly. This means that all staff know what to do if they are worried about a pupil's welfare. Child protection records contain appropriate information and show that leaders work well with other agencies when they have any concerns about pupils' safety. In addition, the procedures for vetting the suitability of staff and visitors to work with pupils are rigorous.

Pupils told me that they feel safe and well cared for at school. They have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe. For example, they explained how to stay safe when using the internet, and when they are out riding their bikes. In addition, pupils told me that they learn about fire safety and how to stay safe

around local waterways, including canals. Pupils are confident that any adult at school would help them if they were upset or worried about anything.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry was about pupils' progress in writing in key stage 2. Over time, pupils have made less progress in writing than in reading or mathematics. Leaders have ensured that there is a consistent approach to teaching writing throughout the school. Teachers use their strong subject knowledge to develop pupils' understanding of spelling, punctuation and grammar rules alongside the key features of different types of writing.
- Pupils' books show that they have many opportunities to produce extended pieces of writing. These tasks are often linked to the termly topic or to texts that pupils have been reading. For example, pupils across the school wrote letters to the author of their favourite book, explaining why they had enjoyed it, and asked for further information about characters and plots. Pupils enjoy writing and respond well to teachers' high expectations of the work they produce. As a result, most pupils produce work to the best of their ability. Sometimes, the amount of work pupils can produce is limited by fixed lines that set where they must stop. Occasionally, this affects the amount of writing that pupils, particularly the most able, complete.
- My second line of enquiry was about the quality of teaching in key stage 1. We agreed a focus on writing because attainment in this subject has been below national averages over the last three years. Leaders ensure that teachers in key stage 1 have a sound understanding of the typical standard in each year group and that they plan lessons that build on what pupils already know and can do. Pupils' books show that they make good progress, for example in their use of punctuation, grammar and spelling. In addition, teachers develop pupils' awareness of the reader and how to make what they write as interesting as possible. For example, pupils' books show that they were encouraged to think very carefully about the most suitable adjectives to describe a recent visit to the local fire station. Pupils enjoy writing. During the inspection, pupils were particularly keen to share what they had written with Ffion, the therapy dog who is more than happy to listen to their descriptions.
- My next line of enquiry focused on how well pupil premium funding is used. Over the last two years, disadvantaged pupils have made less progress than other pupils in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of key stage 2. Leaders monitor the progress of disadvantaged pupils very closely and carry out half-termly checks on how this group of pupils are getting on with their work. You ensure that interventions are provided for any disadvantaged pupil at risk of falling behind academically or who needs support with their social and emotional skills, to be ready to learn. In addition, you check the impact that this extra support is having on the progress of individual pupils. The school's assessment information shows that overall, disadvantaged pupils are now making good progress throughout the school and that there are no wide differences between rates of progress made by disadvantaged and other pupils in any year group.

- Finally, I wanted to find out about the quality of the curriculum and how well pupils are prepared for life in modern Britain and the next stages of their education. Leaders have created a broad and balanced curriculum that is built around pupils' interests, the local area and national curriculum requirements. Topics are planned to last throughout the term to promote deep learning. Teachers weave in special focus weeks, for example the centenary of the RAF, that pique pupils' interests and involve parents and carers and the wider community in learning.
- In some subjects, for example science, leaders have thought very carefully about how learning is sequenced throughout the key stage. Pupils build their scientific knowledge and apply this when planning and carrying out experiments and in their evaluations of their results. In addition, there are plenty of opportunities for pupils to apply their reading, writing and mathematical skills across a variety of subjects. Pupils' work in books shows that the most able pupils are often challenged with more difficult work in a variety of subjects. However, there is more work to do to ensure that this is consistent in all year groups across all areas of the curriculum.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they increase the proportion of pupils reaching the expected and greater depth standard at the end of key stage 1
- teachers use their knowledge of what pupils know and can do in all subjects across the school to provide sufficient challenge for the most able 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 Shropshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Jo Evans

Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and other leaders, parents and three governors. I also met with a representative of the local authority. We visited classrooms and looked at pupils' work together. I also met with a group of pupils. In addition, I spoke to members of staff at various times during the day. I reviewed the school's website and documents, including the single central record and safeguarding systems. I also reviewed the school's self-evaluation, improvement plans, monitoring information, and pupil progress and assessment information.

I took account of the 39 responses by parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the 21 responses to the staff survey. I also took account of 25 responses to the pupil questionnaire.