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Dear Mrs Scutt

Short inspection of Stow-on-the-Wold Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 17 July 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 June 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Over the years, you have led the school with increasing confidence and a sense of purpose. Your time in post has enabled you to develop a very incisive understanding of the school and the community it serves. While you are fully aware of the school's many strengths, you are not complacent. You know the key areas for development and are tackling these successfully.

You work collaboratively with other members of staff and, in so doing, have strengthened leadership throughout the school. For example, subject leaders for mathematics and English have been given responsibility to develop particular aspects of these subjects. Working in conjunction with yourself and others, subject leaders are encouraged to use their initiative, contribute their ideas and drive improvements. Stronger middle leadership has helped you in your efforts to improve writing, which was an area for improvement from the previous inspection. Leaders have focused on pupils' use of vocabulary in their writing. They have devised strategies which encourage pupils to use a diverse range of vocabulary, matched to purpose and audience.

The trust you place in others is felt by the whole staff, who are united behind your vision for the school. Staff are supportive of each other and work with common purpose. This has increased the resilience of staff, so that the team copes well in the face of adversity. All of the staff who responded to the survey issued during the

inspection agree strongly that they are proud to be members of staff. They also agree that the school is well led and staff are treated with respect.

You are well supported by governors and external advisers. Governors bring different skills and experience to bear on their work but all are equally committed to the school. They are not afraid to have challenging conversations in order to hold leaders to account, but are also a source of encouragement during difficult times. Governors take advice from external advisers, who provide additional information which helps governors evaluate the effectiveness of leaders' work. You welcome the involvement of external advisers because they provide an objective perspective on the work of the school. They also provide training and help you to cultivate partnerships with other schools and organisations. Advisers speak highly of your willingness to 'look outwards' and engage with others outside the school.

One of the key strengths of the school is the work of leaders to place the school at the centre of its community. The school welcomes all and encourages pupils to be kind, considerate and tolerant towards each other, regardless of difference. Consequently, the school plays an important role in bringing people together. It is providing an increasing number of services to people in the community and extending the range of provision available to pupils. Pupils go out into the community regularly to support others. For example, during the inspection, some pupils went to the local old people's home to sing to the residents.

The overwhelming majority of parents and carers are satisfied with the work of the school. All of the parents who responded to the online survey, Parent View, agreed that their children are happy and safe in the school. Nearly all the respondents would recommend the school.

Effective leadership has established high expectations of the quality of teaching and pupils' behaviour. Pupils are keen to work hard and please their teachers. Staff ensure that their planning, resourcing, teaching and assessment are fit for purpose and meet the demands of the new curriculum. As a result, pupils achieve well in their different subjects by the time they leave the school. Staff continue to consolidate improvements to pupils' English and mathematics skills because, as you acknowledge, there is room for further improvement.

At the beginning of the inspection, we agreed on the key lines of enquiry to be considered during the day. These included establishing the effectiveness of leaders' actions to provide pupils with a broad and balanced curriculum. We also considered whether leaders' actions were enabling more pupils to achieve at a higher standard across the school. Additionally, we checked whether leaders' actions were enabling more pupils in Year 1 to meet the expected standard in the national phonics screening check. Finally, we considered whether safeguarding is effective. These lines of enquiry are considered below, under 'Safeguarding' and 'Inspection findings', where they have not been referred to elsewhere.

Safeguarding is effective.

You, as the designated safeguarding lead, have been trained appropriately in child protection. You have ensured, in turn, that all other staff are trained, vigilant and aware of the procedure to follow should they have concerns about a child. You are tenacious and persistent in your efforts to secure the support pupils need, especially when that support is not immediately forthcoming. You have fostered strong relationships with outside agencies in order to aid communication and prompt, effective support.

Pupils feel very safe in the school. The pupils who spoke with me said there was no bullying in the school. Some pupils who responded to the survey issued during the inspection stated that bullying did occur but was dealt with effectively by staff. Pupils trust staff to resolve any issues that arise between pupils and say they are well supported. One pupil said, 'If there was bullying, they [staff] would take it seriously.' All pupils who responded to the survey said there was an adult they would talk to at the school if something was worrying them.

Checks to ensure that staff are suitable to work with children are up to date and comprehensive. Designated staff and relevant governors have had safer recruitment training to ensure that adults who apply to join the school are suitable. Appropriate risk assessments for different aspects of the school's work are in place to ensure that pupils' safety is prioritised.

Inspection findings

- Leaders take a principled approach to the curriculum. They believe that pupils should experience a rich diet of different subjects and extra-curricular opportunities which are relevant to pupils' experiences. The curriculum does not prioritise English and mathematics to the detriment of other subjects.
- The work of pupils shows that they study a range of subjects, including humanities, arts and science, in depth. Pupils of different abilities are challenged to think deeply because they are set interesting, topical tasks. Pupils study problem solving and spelling, punctuation and grammar as discrete subjects.
- Leaders have developed cross-curricular writing, so that pupils are given opportunities to practise writing for different purposes and audiences in subjects other than English. For example, pupils studying Brazil as a topic have produced pieces of non-fiction writing, such as a report on different rivers.
- More pupils are achieving at a higher standard across the school. This is because teachers have increasingly high expectations of what pupils can achieve. They continue to refine their use of assessment, moderate their work and adapt schemes of learning to meet the greater demands of the new curriculum.
- Classrooms are vibrant, busy places where pupils are encouraged to 'wrestle' with their learning, rather than passively digest what they are taught. In order to deepen their thinking, pupils are encouraged to share ideas and opinions with

each other. Classrooms are safe spaces in which they can speak up without fear of 'getting it wrong'.

- Pupils demonstrate good attitudes to learning because they enjoy their school experience. Teachers set tasks which are pitched appropriately to pupils' abilities and, regardless of starting points, encourage pupils to aim high. This builds pupils' confidence, which is also reinforced by pupils knowing the skills and knowledge they have acquired and what they need to learn next. Pupils also feel well supported by staff when they get stuck with their learning. One pupil who spoke with me said that staff are helpful because they 'show you how to do it but don't show you the answer'.
- Pupils use the advice they receive in English and mathematics to identify their mistakes and improve their work. However, pupils do not do this to the same degree in other subjects, such as topics and science.
- Leaders have introduced a new system for the teaching of phonics. This is proving to be successful because pupils enjoy it and teachers like using it. Consequently, pupils' attainment in phonics is rising. In 2018, the proportion of pupils attaining the expected standard in the national phonics screening check was above the national average. This follows a number of years where attainment was below average.
- Attendance overall, and for different groups of pupils, is broadly in line with the national average this academic year. This is an improvement on last year. However, absence for a small number of pupils is still too high and leaders agree that there is further work to be done to improve attendance for these pupils.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- efforts continue to improve the attendance of a small number of pupils
- pupils use teachers' feedback more effectively to improve their work in subjects other than English and mathematics.

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

Yours sincerely

Steve Smith
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I spoke to you, subject leaders for English and mathematics, representatives of the governing body and pupils. I spoke on the telephone with a representative of the local authority and an external adviser.

You and I visited lessons to observe pupils' attitudes to learning. I also scrutinised the work in pupils' books with the subject leaders for mathematics and English.

A range of documentary evidence was considered, which included the school's self-evaluation and information relating to pupils' progress and attendance. Additionally, I scrutinised various safeguarding records, including those relating to the suitability of staff to work with children.

I took account of the 33 responses to the Parent View online survey. In addition, I took account of the 14 responses to the staff survey and the 21 responses to the pupil survey issued during the inspection.