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2 May 2018

Mrs Trish Edwards
Gnosall St Lawrence CofE Primary Academy
Lowfield Lane
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Dear Mrs Edwards

Short inspection of Gnosall St Lawrence CoE Primary Academy

Following my visit to the school on 6 March 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 your school was judged to be good in October 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 and other senior leaders, including those with responsibility for governance, set and promote the values of the school with clarity and consistency. You and your colleagues have high aspirations for the pupils in your care, which enable them to be 'the best they can be'. Parents and carers are very positive about the school and speak highly of the successes their children achieve.

You know the school very well, so your self-evaluation of the school is thorough and accurate. You set a clear direction and establish appropriate areas for improvement for the school. These are understood by all.

Pupils demonstrate the utmost respect towards one another and adults, both in and out of classrooms. They show courtesy and kindness and try hard in their work. Pupils are given responsibilities in school, such as taking on the role of e-safety monitors. They all contribute to the monthly 'School Forum', where their ideas on school improvement are listened to and acted upon.

Children achieve well from their secure foundations at the start of school life in Pre-school and/or Reception. The majority of children make accelerated progress to achieve at least a good level of development. The teaching of early reading is a strength of the school. You have invested in effective training for staff and new

resources, so that the standards in the Year 1 phonics check are above those of pupils nationally. A greater proportion of pupils achieve the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics year-on-year at the end of both key stages 1 and 2. However, expectations of most-able pupils could be raised further, particularly in writing and mathematics.

Safeguarding is effective.

St Lawrence Primary Academy places a high priority on keeping all pupils safe. Leaders, including governors, ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that staff training is fully up to date. The school's safeguarding policy meets statutory requirements. The introduction of an electronic system ensures that all concerns and incidents are recorded in detail and that appropriate agencies are involved where necessary.

School leaders and pupils alike have identified access to the internet and the use of social media sites as the biggest safeguarding risk to pupils. The e-safety monitors, led by a member of staff, are very enthusiastic about their role in supporting other pupils in keeping safe online. They are knowledgeable about the dangers that communicating with strangers can pose, and actively promote being safe to others. Pupils are clear that they are safe in school and that bullying does not happen. They are clear as to the difference between falling out and being bullied. Pupils say an adult would intervene if bullying did take place.

You monitor attendance carefully and take positive action to ensure that all pupils attend regularly. This includes a rigorous approach, including carrying out home visits, to following up any attendance issues that have not been communicated with the school. As a result, the parents have a positive attitude towards their children attending school regularly.

Inspection findings

- During my visit, we agreed to focus on how well most-able boys were being stretched and challenged to reach the highest standard in writing at key stage 2. This was because, for the past two years, the proportion of pupils achieving greater depth in writing has been below that of pupils nationally. In 2017, boys attained less well than girls in achieving age-related expectations, and no boys achieved greater depth. The progress that all pupils made in writing was also much less than in reading and mathematics in 2017. Prior to the inspection, you had rightly identified the need to raise attainment for most-able pupils, and all teachers understand that this is a key school improvement priority.
- You have monitored the level of engagement of most-able pupils in lessons, provided targeted support to accelerate progress and have implemented a system of self- and peer-assessment. Prior to teachers providing feedback, pupils now regularly use checklists to self- and peer-assess their writing, which helps them to identify areas for improvement. However, pupils currently lack an oversight of their progress and achievement overall, in order to successfully

address gaps in their own writing skills and achieve the higher standards of which they are capable.

- We also explored how effectively teaching is improving pupils' knowledge of spelling, punctuation and grammar. You had identified the need to improve the quality of teaching of this subject, and work in pupils' books reflects their increased understanding. Nevertheless, on occasions, the teaching of spelling, punctuation and grammar is not followed up carefully enough in writing lessons. For example, some pupils incorrectly write uppercase letters, which teachers do not correct. As a result, mistakes are repeated, and this does not help to improve pupils' writing skills.
- You have acted quickly to develop teachers' understanding of the national expectations for writing and to improve the quality of your assessments by moderating writing across the multi-academy trust (MAT). You have put appropriate training in place and have closely monitored pupils' progress. While this is improving pupils' achievement in writing in some classes, they still need more opportunities to apply their writing skills in other subjects. Additionally, some pupils are still not being sufficiently challenged in order to make the progress of which they are capable. Progress is further hindered by an inconsistent approach to the teaching of handwriting across the school. You have put in place clear expectations at the beginning of key stage 1, but these are not built upon well enough as pupils progress through key stage 2.
- We explored how well most-able pupils achieve in key stages 1 and 2 in mathematics. This was because in 2017 the proportion of pupils achieving greater depth in mathematics was below that of pupils nationally. You have identified the need to accelerate progress for most-able pupils in mathematics and have supported staff in adopting teaching strategies to deepen pupils' understanding. You have closely monitored the progress that these pupils make. You are also further developing the capacity of middle leaders to enhance their contribution to school improvement. Closer scrutiny of pupils' work shows that opportunities for pupils to develop their reasoning and problem-solving skills is too limited in some classes. This has the effect of limiting pupils' progress.
- Finally, we explored how well leaders use pupil premium funding to reduce the difference between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and that of other pupils nationally. You closely monitor the performance of all groups of pupils, and the outcomes of recent analysis demonstrate accelerated progress for the majority of pupils entitled to support through pupil premium funding.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers provide a high level of challenge for most-able pupils, so that they make the progress of which they are capable
- high expectations of handwriting are consistently applied across the school

- the curriculum in mathematics is developed so that pupils' fluency, reasoning and problem-solving improve further and enable the development of deeper understanding for all groups of pupils.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the director of education for the Diocese of Lichfield, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Staffordshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Susan Blackburn
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and all your staff, the chair and vice chair of the governing body, three other governors and the chief executive officer of the MAT. I also met with your deputy headteacher. I reviewed documentation relating to pupils' progress, achievement and attendance, the school improvement plan, safeguarding checks, policies and procedures. We discussed your evaluation of the school's effectiveness and examined the evidence that supports your evaluations. I observed pupils in classes, around the school, including in the playground, and spoke with a group of pupils responsible for promoting e-safety. Together with you and your deputy headteacher, I visited classes in key stages 1 and 2, and we discussed our observations. We also looked at books and spoke to pupils about their work. The views of 30 parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online parent questionnaire, were taken into account alongside the school's own survey of parents' views from January 2018. I spoke with parents at the start of the school day. I also considered the school's own staff survey.