

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



24 January 2019

Mr Dave Tinker
Headteacher
Wistanstow CofE Primary School
Wistanstow
Craven Arms
Shropshire
SY7 8DQ

Dear Mr Tinker

Short inspection of Wistanstow CofE Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 16 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 February 2015.

This school continues to be good.

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

During the last academic year, governors and the local authority became concerned about a dip in standards at the school and the absence of effective actions to address this. You joined the school in an advisory capacity in the summer term of 2018 and took up the post of headteacher in September. You are currently headteacher of two other local primary schools, Church Preen Primary School and Brockton Church of England Primary School. You have used that experience wisely in leading this school. You have formed a strong working relationship with the assistant headteacher and together you are taking effective steps to improve the school. You have written a detailed development plan that provides measures that will enable governors and others to judge its effectiveness. You have secured the confidence of the staff, who appreciate your clear sense of direction and enthusiasm. Staff have already benefited from visits to one of the other schools that you lead, and from professional development held jointly for all three schools.

Parents and carers are resoundingly supportive of the school. All those who responded to the online survey, Parent View, or who spoke with me personally would recommend the school to another parent. They appreciate the friendliness and active consideration of the school community. One parent reflected the general view, saying that their daughter had been 'utterly cherished' since joining the school.

Pupils are very well behaved, both in the classroom and at social times. At break and lunchtimes, they play happily on the school yard. This is fairly small, but pupils make good use of a wide range of play equipment. In lessons, pupils concentrate well and persevere. They have a well-developed understanding of the importance of learning and enjoy it. In the first term of this academic year, pupils' attendance rose to be above the national average. Pupils collaborate effectively, for example explaining to each other how to approach a particular question. One pupil told me that when work was particularly challenging, 'We work it out together.' However, teachers do not insist on sufficiently high standards of presentation, so pupils' workbooks do not do full justice to their efforts.

Pupils have good opportunities to contribute to the management of the school. They value acting as school councillors and playground monitors. These roles contribute to their understanding of democracy, the importance of taking responsibility and helping others. The school places a sustained emphasis on charitable giving.

The school has close links with the independent pre-school setting on the same site. These contribute to a smooth transition into the Reception class. Children get off to a good start in the school, and in recent years, pupils' attainment in the early years and at key stage 1 has been at or above the national average.

Pupils' achievement at key stage 2 has been more modest. Over recent years, pupils' attainment and progress have been broadly average. The proportion of pupils attaining the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics was low in 2017, but recovered to be in line with the national average in 2018. The proportion of key stage 2 pupils attaining the higher standard or working at greater depth has generally been below that seen nationally. Inspection evidence showed that current pupils are generally making good progress in English and mathematics, because leaders have provided teachers with renewed energy and clearer expectations. Pockets of underachievement remain, however, reflecting some weaker teaching in the past.

Leaders have implemented procedures that check regularly on pupils' attainment in reading, writing, spelling and mathematics. They use the results to identify pupils who are falling behind, so that they can plan additional teaching to help them to catch up.

Safeguarding is effective.

With the assistance of the local authority, you have undertaken a thorough audit of safeguarding arrangements. You have addressed the few minor issues that were identified. As a result, all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You have ensured that all staff are aware of their safeguarding responsibilities. Leaders provide staff with updates when national or local circumstances change. Staff work well with families to address the additional needs of pupils whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable.

Pupils told me that they feel entirely safe in school. They said that bullying does not occur, and that staff address any minor disagreements promptly and effectively. Pupils were able to recall, in good detail, the advice that they have received on how to stay

safe online. They also spoke of learning about road safety and the school's insistence that they learn to swim. Pupils have a good knowledge of healthy eating.

Inspection findings

- The teaching of writing is characterised by explicit attention to widening the vocabulary and grammar that pupils are able to use. Pupils consult dictionaries and thesauruses confidently. They learn how to write in a variety of different styles for different contexts, and tasks in other subjects help to reinforce their literacy skills. The school provides pupils with spellings to learn based on their existing capability, but spelling remains the weakest aspect of pupils' writing.
- Pupils make good use of practical equipment in learning mathematics, and cover a wide range of topics. They learn to apply their calculation skills to practical contexts. Pupils have good opportunities to discuss their work and are able to explain their mathematical thinking. In lessons, teachers check effectively on the progress of individuals, so that they are able to move them on or provide additional support as required. In science, pupils demonstrate the ability to draw effectively on their numeracy skills, for example in constructing accurate graphs.
- Pupils told me that they enjoy the school's broad curriculum. They commented, for example, on the opportunities to learn coding in information and communication technology, and to extend their painting skills. You ensure also that pupils gain a good understanding of people who have religions, cultures and beliefs different from their own. For example, we looked at recent work about those who came to this country from the West Indies and the culture of their homelands. Most pupils attend after-school clubs for netball and craft. Pupils in upper key stage 2 benefit from a residential visit, where they can enjoy various outdoor activities.
- During the inspection, we saw evidence of some high attainment in science, history and music. There was evidence too that pupils achieve well in physical education. However, some inconsistency in coverage of the curriculum and the quality of pupils' work showed that there is more to do to ensure that work in all foundation subjects builds successfully on what pupils already know and understand.
- The previous inspection report asked the school to improve the progress of the most able pupils. Leaders have ensured that teachers are aware of all pupils' prior attainment and academic potential. Inspection evidence showed that teachers generally set tasks that build effectively on the prior learning of pupils of different abilities, including that of the most able. Pupils' strong commitment to and interest in their work mean that the most able make good use of the freedom to complete more open-ended tasks. For example, we saw some projects on micro-organisms, in which Year 6 pupils had planned, researched and presented information to a very high standard.
- You and the assistant headteacher have an accurate view of the school's effectiveness. You have both made helpful checks on the quality of teaching and learning, and provided guidance for colleagues. During the inspection, your views on the teaching that we observed and the work scrutiny accorded well with mine. You present governors with detailed information about the school, and they have made sure that they know how to interpret it. The governing body, which has undergone some recent changes, has adopted its own procedures for checking regularly on the

effectiveness of the school's improvement plans. Although these are yet to take full effect, they have begun to have an impact on the school. Governors play an effective part in checking on the school's safeguarding arrangements.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they make sure that all teachers encourage pupils to sustain high standards of presentation
- current strategies for the teaching of spelling lead to sustained improvement
- pupils' work in all foundation subjects is securely based on what they already know and understand, so that they are able to make strong progress.

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 Shropshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Martin Spoor
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, the assistant headteacher and governors. I also held informal conversations with other members of staff. I met with a representative of the local authority. I observed learning, including the teaching of music, English and mathematics. I conducted my observations jointly with you. I scrutinised several pupils' work from the current academic year. I met with a group of pupils to gather their views and spoke informally with several more. I spoke with parents at the start of the school day. I observed pupils' behaviour during lessons, at social times and when they moved around the school.

I took account of the 21 recent responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, including comments made using the free-text service. I also considered the five responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.

I scrutinised a wide range of documents, both electronically and on paper, including the school's evaluation of its own performance and its plans for improvement; records of governors' meetings and their plans for monitoring the impact of leaders' actions; records showing how leaders monitor the quality of teaching; policies; records of visits to the school by officers of the local authority; and records of pupils' achievement, attendance and behaviour. I looked in detail at records that show how the school keeps pupils safe.

The small number of pupils, and of pupils in particular groups in each year group, prohibits some detailed comment on their outcomes. To do so would risk the identification of the pupils involved.