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Miss Emma Drew
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Dear Miss Drew

Short inspection of Overleigh St Mary's CofE Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 26 March 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 July 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You lead a welcoming and inclusive school where practice is firmly rooted in the school's motto, 'Children first'. Since your appointment in 2017, you have been resolute in sharing your vision and ambition for every pupil to achieve to their best, develop in confidence and be well prepared for their next stage of education. Staff, governors and parents have welcomed the changes that the new leadership team have brought to the school. Standards are rising and pupils achieve well. Leaders are aspirational for the school and keen to raise standards still further, including for disadvantaged pupils.

Relationships at all levels within the school are polite and caring, reflecting the school's Christian values, including respect, love and tolerance. Pupils develop as thoughtful, helpful and well-behaved individuals. They are extremely polite and welcoming to visitors. In class, pupils work cooperatively and strive to do their best, contributing with enthusiasm to class discussions. The pupils with whom I spoke told me that they are very proud of their school. They enjoy learning because of the many trips and visits that you provide. Staff teach pupils to value diversity, including other cultures and religions. As one pupil said, 'No matter what their differences, each individual is perfect.'

You and your leadership team have developed an enthusiastic team of staff who welcome the training you give them to improve their skills. Leaders use their accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school to tailor

ongoing professional development, including improving the skills of middle leaders. You hold teachers to account for the quality of teaching and learning. This has had a positive effect on improving outcomes for pupils across the school. These are broadly in line with national averages by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 in reading, writing and mathematics.

Your skilled governing body share your high ambitions for the school. They are keen for staff to build on recent improvements in writing outcomes, so that pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, make even better progress. Governors attend very regular training to strengthen their skills and knowledge. This helps them to provide a good balance of challenge and support for leaders. Governors keep a careful check on the impact of additional funding, including for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Parents and carers share pupils' positive view of the school. Parents responding to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, valued the committed and hard-working staff. A typical comment described the school as 'a safe, supportive, encouraging environment'. The parents with whom I spoke at the start of the school day were keen to praise the good communication between school and home. They shared how teachers deal quickly and appropriately with any concerns that parents have.

Leaders have responded well to the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. They were asked to provide more opportunities for middle leaders to check that all pupils achieve their best in subjects across the curriculum. During the inspection, I found that you have provided middle leaders with a range of training to improve their skills, including working with professionals from other schools. Middle leaders check pupils' learning across the curriculum, by scrutinising pupils' work and talking to pupils, for example. These detailed and regular checks are used to ensure that pupils achieve well and make good progress in subjects including art, history and geography.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. You have made sure that safeguarding has a high profile throughout the school. All necessary checks are made on the suitability of staff to work with children and you check on visitors to the school. You provide staff with regular training and safeguarding updates so that they are vigilant and understand the current guidance. Useful safeguarding information is displayed around school.

You diligently follow up all concerns and make sure that pupils are safe, including pupils at risk of being missing from education. You work well with other professionals and agencies to secure support for pupils when necessary. Staff and visitors to school teach pupils how to keep themselves safe both online and in the wider community, including cycling and road safety. Pupils learn how to avoid knife crime. They are confident about how to seek help and support if they have any

concerns. Pupils report that they feel safe in school and that any incidents of bullying are rare and quickly dealt with by staff.

Inspection findings

- The inspection focused on a number of key lines of enquiry, the first of which was to check how regularly pupils attend school. Pupils value their education and attend very regularly. Leaders check pupils' attendance daily and follow up absences with parents. Leaders have put in place a range of support and initiatives to raise attendance for all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND. As a result of these effective actions, attendance has improved this year and is now in line with national averages. A small number of pupils are persistently absent. Leaders are proactive in working with these pupils and their families to improve attendance. This is having a positive impact.
- For my second key line of enquiry, I checked on the progress and attainment that pupils make in their writing in key stage 2. This was because, in 2018, pupils' achievement in writing by the end of Year 6 was below what they achieved in reading and mathematics. During the inspection, I found that leaders have made recent changes to the way that staff teach writing. These changes are having a positive impact. Attractive learning displays across the school are used to celebrate examples of high-quality writing in different subjects. Pupils' workbooks show that they write at length and for a range of different purposes. Pupils use their grammar, punctuation and spelling skills with accuracy and show increasing sophistication in their choice of vocabulary. The changes that you have made are recent and still embedding. Occasionally, staff plan activities which do not match pupils' abilities closely enough, and this slows the progress that some pupils make.
- During the inspection, I found that staff in Reception plan engaging and exciting opportunities for children to develop their early writing skills. On my visit to the early years classrooms, children were enthused by their visit from a dinosaur, and had written a range of notes and cards to their exciting visitor. Children were developing their fine motor skills by carefully chopping and cutting food.
- The next key line of enquiry was to check how leaders use additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils. Since your appointment, you have taken a wide range of steps to ensure that this funding is spent appropriately to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. You and your staff know these pupils well and have a clear understanding of any barriers to learning that they have. Staff provide valuable additional support for pupils' learning, such as extra tuition. You make sure that staff give disadvantaged pupils opportunities to develop their confidence through attending after school clubs, events and trips. Staff analyse the impact of this additional provision on a very regular basis to ensure that it is making a difference. Your checks on learning show that this group of pupils are making good progress from their varied starting points. Leaders recognise that some disadvantaged pupils have lower attainment than other pupils in school. You are taking steps to ensure that these pupils make even stronger progress in their learning.

- During the inspection, I found that pupils value the opportunities that you give them to support and care for others, including the school council, the 'Green Team' and the school's Ethos Council. Pupils described how they had helped improve prayer areas in classrooms, used for quiet contemplation and reflection. Pupils in the Green Team explained how they have put in place recycling opportunities throughout the school. Pupils take pride in organising a range of charitable fundraising events. Through such initiatives, you develop pupils' confidence and awareness of others, preparing them well for their next stage of education.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- recent changes to the approach to teaching writing are embedded, so that pupils reach the standards of which they are capable
- teachers plan activities which more closely match pupils' abilities, so that pupils make good progress in their learning
- staff continue to refine and improve the provision for disadvantaged pupils so that they make even stronger progress in their learning.

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

Yours sincerely

Elizabeth Stevens
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you, your deputy headteacher, middle leaders and teachers. I met with the English leaders and the leaders responsible for disadvantaged pupils. I also spoke to six governors, including the chair of the governing body. I spoke to representatives of the local authority and the diocese. I met with eight pupils from key stage 2 and took account of 32 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey. I visited classes with you where I observed teaching and learning, looked at pupils' work and spoke with pupils.

I took account of 61 responses to Parent View, the Ofsted online questionnaire, including free-text responses. I also met with parents before school. I took account of 17 responses to Ofsted's staff survey. I looked at a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan, minutes of governing body meetings and pupils' behaviour logs. I evaluated safeguarding procedures,

including policies to keep pupils safe, staff training records, safeguarding checks and attendance information. I undertook a review of the school's website.