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Mrs Deborah Hudson
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Hudson

Short inspection of The Ridge Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 16 May 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 February 2014.

This school continues to be good.

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

Your strong and tenacious leadership, well supported by other leaders and governors, is central to the continued improvement of the school. You have worked closely with staff and governors and ensured that the school has moved forward through changes to staffing over the last year. Leaders have supported new staff effectively, through appropriate training and the sharing of best practice. Your vision of a fully rounded education for pupils is realised through a commitment to high standards, as well as access to an enriched curriculum. As a result of the high expectations that you and the leaders set, pupils make good progress and thrive on their journey through school. All staff who responded to the Ofsted survey said that they were proud to be a member of the school.

Leaders have dealt successfully with the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. You and other leaders have focused on developing a system of assessment which enables teachers to understand pupils' learning needs. You ensure that teachers use assessment information accurately when planning for learning activities so that work is not too easy or hard. Work in books shows that teachers take into account what pupils already know to move them on in their learning. You have ensured that the guidance pupils receive from teachers is clear and timely. Pupils across the school talk about how they are able to improve their work because of the effective help they get from their teachers. The impact of this

can be seen in the above-average standards overall at the end of the early years and in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stages 1 and 2 in 2017.

Governors have a clear sense of purpose, have a wide range of skills and are supportive of the work you do. Governors are inquisitive, and they ask pertinent, challenging questions. Governors test out your assertions about the strengths of the school by visiting lessons, meeting with staff and talking to pupils. In this way, governors have a clear and accurate view of how well the school is doing.

You have managed changes to staffing well and ensured that staff have received appropriate training and the quality of teaching is maintained. You are aware of a few inconsistencies in teaching and learning and are addressing these. You know that assessment across the whole curriculum could be strengthened further and that some pupils could reach even higher standards in writing.

All parents who spoke to me at the end of the day and the vast majority who commented online were positive about the school. A typical comment from a parent was: 'I cannot praise the school's leadership team and all its staff and associated support network highly enough. My children's emotional and educational advancements continue to surprise and delight me.'

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders, governors and staff at all levels take considerable care to ensure that pupils are kept safe and looked after well. You have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Staff are vigilant in responding to any concerns. Leaders with responsibility are well trained to carry out their duties effectively. They know how to respond should any potential safeguarding incident arise. They refer and report any incidents promptly to the relevant authorities and ensure that their records are kept confidential and secure.

All staff receive regular training and updates. Leaders make checks to ensure that staff understand what to do should an incident occur. Pupils spoken to said that they feel very safe in school and that bullying is rare. One pupil commented, 'Bullying is rare, and it would always be sorted. The teacher would sort it out as soon as possible.' They know what to do if anything worries them, for example when accessing social media. Pupils know how to protect themselves when they use the internet and other electronic equipment such as personal tablets and mobile phones. Nearly all the parents who responded to Parent View and all those who spoke to me said that their children feel safe and happy at school. Governors carry out very regular and robust checks to make sure that leaders fulfil their statutory responsibilities.

Inspection findings

- You provide strong leadership, well supported by other leaders. You had already identified the key lines of enquiry for the inspection.
- One line of enquiry focused on the progress that pupils made in writing at key

stage 2. In 2017, the progress made by pupils was below that made in reading and mathematics. On further analysis, you identified that pupils were not attaining the highest standards in writing, especially for middle-attaining pupils and those who had achieved the higher standards at key stage 1. This is a focus area for the school and a priority on your school development plan. You introduced a new structure for teaching writing. Your English leader has strong subject knowledge and is working effectively with other teachers, helping to improve their subject knowledge and to provide pupils with clear next steps of how to improve their writing through individual targets. Pupils are increasingly able to express their ideas because they have a better understanding of the key features included in a piece of written work. As a result, the writing in their English books is developing well.

- When we visited lessons, the use of these approaches was evident in most classes across the school. For example, in Year 2, highly effective modelling by the teacher enabled pupils to write excellent descriptions of an animal. One pupil wrote, 'The vast majority of dragons have pointed ears, so they can hear their predators.' She was then able to tell me, with confidence, why the sentence was effective. You agree that there are a few inconsistencies across the school and you continue to work on these areas to ensure that pupils make accelerated progress in writing by the end of key stage 2.
- We also looked at the quality of the wider curriculum, including the teaching of science. You, your staff and the governing body recognise the vital role the curriculum plays in enabling pupils to achieve well. In science books, work shows that pupils have opportunities to plan and carry out investigations and practical work. For example, Year 6 pupils investigated, 'Does gender affect heart rate?' Pupils in Year 2 carried out research into the basic needs of living things and built and tested shelters. 'Spectacular Science' days are memorable for pupils because they experienced a range of activities.
- Pupils have a range of opportunities to learn across a variety of subjects. For example, Year 3 and 4 pupils are learning the recorder and clarinet in music. Pupils' appreciation of music continues as they progress through the school. There are opportunities for them to learn how to play the clarinet, saxophone, violin, guitar and keyboard. In history, pupils in Year 5 visited the Black Country Museum and spoke with enthusiasm about going down a mine to experience life in Victorian times. A range of artwork is evident across the school. For example, pupils had produced work of a good standard in the style of Rangoli patterns and undertaken pointillism in the style of Georges Seurat.
- Pupils receive a wide range of enrichment opportunities, which make a strong contribution to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They enjoy activities such as the residential visits to outdoor adventure centres in key stage 2. The school also employs a specialist physical education teacher, which enables pupils to participate in a range of different activities. You have identified that it would be a benefit to ensure that pupils are assessed with the same rigour in the wider curriculum as they are in English, science, mathematics and physical education. This would help to ensure that pupils' achievement is high in all subjects and there is a consistency of practice across the school.

- The Ridge Primary is a happy and friendly school. The atmosphere in school is warm and supportive, with a positive climate for learning. Behaviour is a strength of the school. The pupils are invariably polite, respectful and responsive and keen to talk about their school. They behave very well indeed in all circumstances – they move up and down stairs, for example, carefully and with consideration for others. Pupils listen and watch attentively during lessons. For example, in the Reception class, children were discussing doubling numbers and listened attentively to each other's ideas and were engrossed in their learning. Relationships between staff and pupils are excellent. Consequently, pupils are happy and enjoy coming to school. One pupil commented, 'I always feel happy and I never do not want to come. I always feel safe, have a good experience and lots of fun.'
- Pupils are very proud to take on additional responsibilities such as their roles as members of the school council, globetrotters and anti-bullying ambassadors. Older pupils discussed their roles in decision-making in the school, including their contribution to the forthcoming 50th anniversary celebrations for the school in September.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teaching is developed even further to secure a greater consistency of approach
- the successful strategies to develop pupils' writing skills, particularly for higher-attaining pupils, are further embedded
- extend the current work which secures effective assessment in English and mathematics across the wider curriculum, resulting in pupils acquiring a high level of skills, knowledge and understanding in all subjects.

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

Yours sincerely

Sarah Somers
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, the deputy headteacher and the assistant headteacher and two governors. I also had telephone calls with an adviser from the local authority and the school's external consultant. I observed pupils learning in lessons and looked at examples of pupils' work. I met with a group of pupils and spoke with other pupils during lessons and at playtime. I scrutinised documents including the school's development plan, the school's own evaluation of

its performance and records of checks made on the suitability of staff to work with children. I took account of responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, from 79 parents and carers. I also spoke to parents at the end of the school day. I considered the responses to Ofsted's staff survey.