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Mrs Anne Bennett
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Dear Mrs Bennett

Short inspection of Perton First School

Following my visit to the school on 27 June 2017, 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 March 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 your leaders have a detailed and accurate understanding of the school's strengths, and where improvements can be made. You have developed a strong leadership team who work together very effectively. Every opportunity is taken to learn from best practice. You and your leaders have formed strong working relationships with local schools to support the school's improvement, especially in developing ways to check on pupils' progress and making strong links with leaders of special educational needs provision elsewhere. As the governors say, 'The school is not an island, it is a community.'

You recognise that the school is on a journey. You are highly aspirational and strive to achieve the best possible outcomes for every pupil. However, your passion and drive for improvement is not at the cost of the welfare of anyone in the school. Your commitment to the care and well-being of pupils and staff is exceptional. The responses to the online parent and staff questionnaires are a testament to this. One member of staff spoke for many by saying, 'This is a wonderful school to work and learn in. We genuinely care about each other and put our children at the heart of everything we do.'

A very high priority is placed on celebrating pupils' achievements. As one governor put it, 'Every success is valued, no matter how small.' 'Shine' assemblies celebrate the artist, mathematician and writer of the week.

Pupils are very eager to gain their bronze, silver, gold and platinum 'star' awards which recognise their hard work and positive behaviour.

Perton First school is a highly inclusive school. Pupils learn about many different faiths and cultures. However, leaders do not just focus on the value of tolerance of other faiths, but of acceptance. Pupils say that, 'Everyone is different, and that is to be celebrated.'

Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. Parents speak highly of the positive relationships between staff and pupils. They have confidence that their children are safe and very well cared for in school, especially those children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. One parent spoke for many when they said, 'It's not just a school; it's a family where every child really does matter.'

At the time of the last inspection, leaders were asked to improve the quality of the outdoor provision in the early years. You have successfully achieved this. The outdoor learning environment is now a bright and exciting area where children from Nursery and Reception can explore and develop their learning in a variety of ways. Changes to the building have enabled children to have easy access to the outdoor learning areas. Children in the early years are confident, happy and independent learners who make good progress in all aspects of their learning.

Following the last inspection, leaders were also asked to develop pupils' information technology and communication skills. This is now a strength of the school. The planning for the teaching of computing has been updated in line with the requirements of the National Curriculum. The school's hardware and software has also been updated to develop pupils' learning in this subject. Support has been provided to staff to help them improve their teaching of computing. Pupils talk confidently about using a range of technology. For example, one pupil described how they had been learning how to programme a robot to move around the floor. Pupils are appointed as 'online safety ambassadors'. They provide advice and guidance to their peers to help them understand how to use computers safely, especially when using the internet.

A further development area from the last inspection was to provide pupils, especially the most able, with more opportunities to work independently. Your focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning in English and mathematics has been successful in developing pupils' independence in their learning. You involved pupils in developing the new marking and feedback policy. Pupils had the opportunity to say what feedback would help them to improve. As a result of this, 'prove-it' questions have been introduced. Teachers provide pupils with 'prove-it' questions at the end of their work to consolidate and further challenge and deepen their learning. This helps pupils to also develop their independent learning skills.

However, you and your leaders recognise that more work needs to be done to develop pupils' learning in subjects other than English and mathematics. Pupils have the opportunity to learn about a wide range of subjects, which teachers plan creatively to provide interesting learning experiences.

However, learning in these subjects is not matched well enough to pupils' needs. Pupils of all abilities are provided with the same work, which results in some pupils finding the work too easy, and some too hard. Consequently, pupils, especially the most able, do not make as much progress as they could in subjects other than English and mathematics.

The leadership of special educational needs provision is highly effective. Carefully targeted support is provided for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities which helps them to make progress in their learning, especially through additional interventions and activities. Support for their social and emotional development also helps them to make good progress. However, the leader recognises that there needs to be a greater focus on meeting the needs of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities when they are taught as part of the whole class to help them make even better progress. Further support needs to be given to teachers to help them plan more effectively for these pupils in lessons to build on the effective support they receive outside the classroom.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of a high quality. All staff place a high priority on keeping pupils safe. You listen carefully to pupils' views and respond to all requests to improve their safety and well-being. For example, pupils asked for 'worry boxes' to be placed in all classes so that they could share any concerns they may have. You ensured that these were put in place and pupils say they are 'amazing.'

Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations and are confident that there is always someone they can turn to in school if they need help. Pupils are taught what bullying is and know what to do if it happens. However, pupils say it rarely happens in school.

Checks on staff working in school are robust to ensure that no risk is posed to pupils. All safeguarding training is up to date and leaders check that staff understand all the information relating to keeping pupils safe.

Inspection findings

- The governors are a strength of the school. They continually seek ways to improve as a governing body. For example, governors have recently reviewed their committee structure and governor links to ensure that these arrangements are enabling them to hold leaders to account. Governors know the school's strengths and areas for development well. Regular visits to school help them to further develop their understanding of the school's performance.
- Governors do not just accept what leaders tell them about the school, they challenge them to provide the evidence to support it. This is carried out in a positive way as governors understand that their role is to be a 'critical friend'.

As a result, leadership of the school is very effective and is helping the school to improve rapidly.

- Children have exciting and stimulating learning experiences in the early years, including in the outdoor area. Positive relationships exist between all staff and the children. As a result of high-quality teaching and learning, children make good progress across Nursery and Reception. Transition arrangements are particularly strong. A parent and toddler group is run in the school every week, and they have the opportunity to join with the Nursery children to sing rhymes and songs. This helps children settle quickly into the Nursery class.
- Leaders accurately identify the needs of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and plan additional support to meet those needs. The leader ensures that parents are fully involved in the support plans which are put in place, and specialist advice is sought when needed. The additional individual and small-group work pupils receive helps them to make good progress in their learning. However, leaders recognise that teachers need to plan more carefully to meet the needs of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities when they are learning in class to help them make even better progress.
- All staff take great pride in providing bright, vibrant and stimulating learning environments to enhance pupils' learning. Pupils appreciate this and are very proud of their school. Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning. Teachers have high expectations of pupils which helps them to make good progress in English and mathematics. However, work in subjects other than English and mathematics needs to be more closely matched to pupils' abilities, especially the most able, to enable them to make better progress across the curriculum.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers develop pupils' skills, especially the most able, in a range of subjects by planning activities which are more carefully matched to their abilities
- teachers receive further support to help them plan to meet the needs of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities more effectively when they are taught as part of the class.

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

Yours sincerely

Ann Pritchard
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection I met with you, the deputy headteacher, assistant headteacher, the early years leader and members of the governing body. I also had a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority. You and your leaders joined me on brief visits to lessons. I talked to pupils about their learning and looked at examples of their work. I observed pupils' behaviour at breaktime and lunchtime. I spoke to parents before school and to pupils throughout the day. I reviewed a range of documentation, including the school's own evaluation of its performance, the school development plan, documents relating to keeping pupils safe and the most recent information about pupils' achievement. I considered the responses from the Ofsted online questionnaire from parents and staff. There were no responses from the pupils' questionnaire.