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Mrs Michele Shevels
Headteacher
Kitwell Primary School and Nursery Class
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Dear Mrs Shevels

Short inspection of Kitwell Primary School and Nursery Class

Following my visit to the school on 1 March 2016, 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 2011.

This school continues to be good.

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

'My child has grown in confidence', and 'my children and I are very happy and proud to be a part of Kitwell school', were just some of the views expressed by parents during the inspection. The school has been through a turbulent time. In partnership with teachers, teaching assistants and governors, you have brought stability to the school. During this inspection, a number of parents spoke positively about your leadership and the changes you have made.

Since the previous inspection, there have been significant changes in staffing. The local authority asked the former headteacher to support another school for approximately 18 months. On the days that the headteacher was working at the other school, the deputy headteacher assumed responsibility for the day-to-day running of Kitwell. In 2014, and following the departure of the previous headteacher, the governors appointed you as the headteacher. Some pupils in Key Stage 2, and especially the pupils who were in the Year 4 class last academic year, have been taught by a number of temporary teachers. Half of the teachers are new to the school. They were not working at the school at the time of the previous inspection.

Instability in staffing has resulted in pupils, especially in Years 3 to 6, making variable rates of progress during their time at the school. Consequently, not all pupils have attained the standards of which they are capable by the time they have left the school. Staffing is now stable. Work in pupils' books and your latest information about pupils' achievement show that in the majority of classes, standards are rising quickly and pupils are making at least good progress in English and mathematics. You recognise that further work is required to raise standards in Years 3 and 5.

The actions taken to enhance the school curriculum have been effective. Pupils are taught a wide range of subjects. Teachers successfully encourage pupils to find out information and be creative. In Year 5, for instance, pupils used books and the internet to research the Anglo-Saxons. They also designed and made shields. Pupils ensured that their shields were embellished with the patterns used by Anglo-Saxons.

Since joining the school, you have appointed new teachers to take responsibility for mathematics, early years, pupils with special educational needs or disability and for overseeing pupils' behaviour. You make sure that all teachers with responsibilities have the time they require to carry out their roles.

Safeguarding is effective.

The arrangements for keeping pupils safe are effective. Once a week, you meet with the deputy headteacher and the staff with responsibility for keeping pupils safe to discuss any emerging concerns about pupils. Together you make sure that pupils who may be at risk receive the support they need both in school and from external agencies. You have worked well with the deputy headteacher to ensure that information relating to keeping pupils safe accurately records any concerns staff may have and the actions taken by senior leaders. Members of the governing body make sure that school policies are kept up to date.

Through the curriculum, staff ensure that pupils of all ages learn how to keep themselves safe. As a result, pupils understand the importance of keeping safe in different situations such as when using social media. Senior leaders are in the process of organising further e-safety workshop for parents.

Inspection findings

- You are a resilient leader. Since your appointment, you have worked with determination to tackle weaknesses in teaching. You have also worked well with staff in order to instigate important changes to the curriculum and to help raise pupils' achievement. Staff work well as a team and respond well to the advice and guidance you provide.

- Leadership of mathematics, early years, behaviour and the provision for pupils with special educational needs or disability is particularly effective. The teachers with responsibility for these aspects are proactive in their approach to working with staff. They use their initiative when leading on improvements and provide individual staff with helpful guidance. The mathematics leader, for example, offers a 'weekly surgery' for staff. This gives staff the chance to discuss how best to accelerate pupils' learning in mathematics. A few leaders in the school require support to carry out their roles and responsibilities. You are providing them with clear direction and assistance.
- Pupils are polite and friendly towards each other and adults. In lessons and around school, the vast majority of pupils behave well. Pupils enjoy taking part in the wide range of lunchtime activities organised by the school's sports coaches and the pupil play leaders. These activities encourage pupils to cooperate with each other and play calmly. Members of the school council are proud of their work. They describe themselves as 'responsible'. Most recently, members have written to the local councillor about issues with parking outside the school. The small number of pupils who need support with their behaviour receive effective support from staff. School records show that the number of incidents of disruptive behaviour has significantly reduced and is now low.
- When children join the school, their skills and knowledge, especially in speaking, writing and mathematics, are much lower than those typical for their age. With support from a senior leader from Shenley Fields Day Centre and Nursery, an independent consultant and the early years leader, staff in the Nursery and Reception classes have refined the way in which they plan work for children so that activities closely match children's learning needs. Consequently, staff are helping the youngest children in the school make strong gains in all areas of learning. During this inspection, the children spoke with confidence about their activities. Work in books showed children beginning to write words, with some having a go at writing sentences. Children's work also showed them counting up to 10 items and successfully ordering items by weight.
- You work well with the teacher with responsibility for English. Together you make sure that the school's approach to teaching pupils how to read helps most pupils to make good progress. Some of the parents I spoke with were complimentary about the additional support their children receive. One commented, 'my son enjoys reading now and reads at home every day'. Staff make sure that pupils learn how to use their phonics knowledge to read with confidence. Pupils told me that they enjoy reading different types of books and learning how to retrieve relevant information. Very occasionally, the activities that teachers plan are too basic. In one instance, a group of pupils were completing a word search. This activity was too easy because the pupils could already spell the words that they were searching for.
- Actions taken to raise achievement in mathematics are having a beneficial impact on pupils' achievement. Teachers are increasingly giving pupils the chance to extend their knowledge and understanding in mathematics by setting activities that are suitable for pupils of differing abilities. Pupils relish a challenge and persevere when asked to solve complex mathematical problems. In Year 6, for example, pupils remained focused and persevered while answering algebra questions. 'This is tough but fun,' said one pupil.

- Work in pupils' books shows that in most classes, pupils are making accelerated progress with their writing. Opportunities for pupils to write regularly and in different subjects have increased. These opportunities give pupils the chance to practise and extend their writing skills successfully. Pupils are getting better at consistently using punctuation and grammar correctly and using their knowledge of phonics to spell accurately. The presentation of pupils' work is variable. In some classes, pupils' work is untidy, with instances of scribbling and doodling.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work together well to ensure that pupils with special educational needs or disability make the same progress as their peers. The teacher with responsibility for overseeing their achievement ensures that these pupils receive effective support. Individual teaching assistants specialise in different types of learning needs. These include autism, speech and language, and social and emotional needs. As a result of this good knowledge, teaching assistants play a crucial role in providing personalised support for pupils who need extra help.
- Staff make effective use of the 'forest school' area. Pupils enjoy learning about the environment and use their imagination to make objects using natural resources. One group of pupils, for instance, designed and made figures using pieces of wood. The figure of a reindeer proved to be particular popular and was subsequently sold to parents.
- The members of the governing body are supportive and loyal. Through regular meetings and visits, they keep themselves up to date with what is happening in the school. They have a secure understanding of overall strengths and the improvements required in teaching and pupils' achievement because you provide them with relevant information. However, the school's systems for collating information about pupils' achievement are cumbersome. This prevents senior leaders and governors from checking how well the actions being taken by staff are helping to close the gaps in the standards attained by different groups of pupils. Not all senior leaders are held rigorously to account for the difference they make to teaching or pupils' achievement by the governing body. Additionally, governors have not checked the impact of sports funding, for example on pupils' participation in physical activity. The governors I met with told me that they are in the process of organising further training and that they intend to organise an external review of governance so that they can further improve their effectiveness.
- The vast majority of parents who spoke with me, or who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire, were positive about the work of the school. They were particularly appreciative of the difference staff are making to their children's learning. A few parents raised concerns about a member of staff. You intend to investigate these concerns before taking action. Staff are working effectively with parents to make sure that pupils attend school regularly. At the time of this monitoring inspection, pupils' attendance, although still below the national average for primary schools, was higher than in previous years.

- Senior leaders and staff make sure that pupils in the school are well looked after and become mature individuals. One parent who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire wrote, 'as a parent I feel happy and secure that my child is being cared for and is receiving the right education to enable him to become a strong member of society'.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils in Years 3 and 5 make at least good progress and reach standards that are at least in line with those expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics
- all teachers have high expectations of the presentation of pupils' work so that pupils in all classes take pride in their work and write neatly
- information about pupils' achievement is collated in a way that enables senior leaders and governors to check how well the actions being taken by staff are helping to close the gaps in the standards attained by different groups of pupils
- governors hold all senior leaders more rigorously to account for the difference they are making to teaching and the achievement of different groups of pupils, and check the impact of sports funding.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for Birmingham City Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Usha Devi
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you, the deputy headteacher and other senior leaders. I also met with the Chair of the Governing Body and three other governors. I spoke informally with parents at the beginning of the school day and with pupils throughout the school day. You joined me on brief visits to all classes in Key Stages 1 and 2. The teacher with responsibility for early years provision joined me on brief visits to the Nursery and Reception classes. We talked to pupils about their learning and reviewed some pupils' writing, mathematics and topic work. I reviewed a range of documentation, including the most recent information about pupils' achievement, the school's own evaluation of its performance, documents related to keeping pupils safe and minutes of governors' meetings.