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Dear Mr Greaves

Short inspection of Cradley CofE Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 13 December 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 September 2011.

This school continues to be good.

You and your leadership team have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

You and your staff have worked hard since the last inspection to further improve many aspects of the school. For example, you and the governors opened a school-run nursery in February 2012 which caters for two- to four-year-olds. This has added to, and improved provision and outcomes for children in the early years. The school curriculum has also been greatly enriched. Innovative teaching methods are used to promote pupils' collaboration, creativity, interaction and independent skills through exciting activities and topics. Parents were fulsome in their praise for the activities offered at after-school clubs, including music, gardening and sport. You place a strong emphasis on pupils' physical and mental health and well-being. You have employed a 'children's champion' to provide support for vulnerable pupils and their families and successfully gained sports awards, including Sports Mark Gold. The school's good reputation has spread and consequently numbers on roll have increased.

Views of stakeholders are positive. As one parent put it, 'Cradley is very much a community school and staff and parents work well together to ensure that good relationships are maintained through a variety of activities and events.' You have appointed a highly committed and able staff team and together you strive to meet pupils' individual needs. Responses to the staff questionnaire show that staff morale is good; 100% of those who responded strongly agreed that they enjoyed working

at Cradley and that staff are treated fairly and with respect. Pupils equally have positive views of the school and say that they can talk to adults at school if they have any worries and that they feel safe.

You have successfully addressed the key issues raised at the previous inspection. Early years provision has improved and a greater focus is placed on improving children's language and literacy skills. The addition of nursery provision has accelerated progress of children. The large majority of children now reach a good level of development and are well prepared for Year 1. However, girls achieve above boys year on year. Writing in key stage 1 has improved and has been consistently above the national average since 2011.

You agree that there remains work to be done in raising the level of challenge for pupils, especially the most able, in order to increase the proportion of pupils working at greater depth at the end of key stage 2. Improved teaching of grammar, punctuation and spelling, together with sharper mental arithmetic and further development of pupils' reasoning skills, also require attention. Together with your leadership team, you have identified writing as a key area for improvement on the school's development plan and subject leaders have a clear vision and drive to bring about the improvements needed.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding procedures are robust. As the designated safeguarding lead, you ensure that staff are fully trained in recognising different types of abuse and aware of the systems and policies in place to raise concerns about pupils. Staff and governors have read and understand the latest guidance of 'Keeping children safe in education' and know what to do to ensure that pupils are protected from potential radicalisation and extremism. You are thorough in your recording of concerns raised. While only a small number of serious issues have arisen in your tenure as headteacher, incidents are well documented and referrals made where appropriate to outside agencies. Robust checks are carried out on staff prior to appointment to ensure that they are suitably qualified and fit to work with children. Safeguarding is a standing agenda item in governor meetings and governors have approved funding to improve site safety and security. As a result, safeguarding practice is fit for purpose.

Pupils feel safe and have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe. This is because pupils' safety and well-being are paramount. Pupils have a good understanding of e-safety and the importance of not disclosing personal information online. They are clear that they should seek adult help or advice if they have any worries and are confident that adults in school will deal with these worries. They understand that different types of bullying exist, but those spoken to say they have never experienced any bullying at school. They reported that minor behaviour incidents are dealt with effectively by staff. All staff and most parents who expressed a view agree that bullying is not an issue in school.

Inspection findings

- As headteacher, you have worked hard to address the key issues presented at the last inspection and raise the quality of teaching and learning outcomes. To this end, there have been significant improvements to the building and curriculum and improved resources are available for teachers. Together with your leadership team, you carry out regular checks on the quality of teaching. You ensure that teachers and subject leaders continue to develop their professional knowledge and expertise by enabling them to teach in other year groups and undertake additional professional and higher qualifications. You work in close collaboration with other local schools. You have used your own skills and expertise to develop the roles of subject leaders at Cradley and have supported another headteacher in the cluster.
- You are ably supported by an effective and knowledgeable leadership team. Subject leaders have a secure understanding of data and how well different individuals, groups and cohorts are achieving. They provide support for colleagues and feedback on areas for improvement following different monitoring activities. Termly meetings about pupils' progress help identify where additional support is needed. Support is provided for pupils who are struggling through group work, one-to-one teaching or a structured intervention programme. Subject leaders have a clear vision for how they will continue to raise achievement in their respective areas and are committed in their roles.
- Governors have a good overview of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. This is because they receive a wide range of information from you as headteacher and from subject leaders. They are not afraid to question or challenge leaders to ensure that decisions made are in the best interests of pupils. They manage the budget effectively and carry out their safeguarding duties diligently. Governors have a firm grasp of how the pupil premium funding is used and the impact this has on eligible pupils. Many governors are well established in their roles and can pinpoint precisely the improvements you have made. Governors canvass parents' views through school surveys to ensure that they are aware of, and can address, any potential issues.
- You have reviewed the teaching of phonics and invested in a new scheme. This is having a positive impact on the achievement of pupils. Phonics is taught well from the outset. Children begin learning their sounds and letters in the early years. This gets them off to a swift start with their early reading and writing skills. Pupils of different abilities in Year 1 who read to me demonstrated strong levels of understanding of how to break down and blend tricky words. Attainment in the Year 1 phonic check is usually above average over time but was in line in 2016 due to a number of pupils joining Year 1 mid-year.
- Pupils enjoy reading and read regularly at home and in school. Parents and volunteers provide valuable support and encouragement with hearing pupils read, as seen in comments made in reading journals. Reading materials provided are diverse and, in the main, challenging. This helps to develop pupils' comprehension skills and extend their vocabulary. Older pupils who struggle with reading appreciate the additional teaching assistant help they receive on a regular basis. This accelerates their progress. Pupils develop good reading habits and can discuss their favourite authors and favourite books.

- Pupils' writing is developing well and current pupils are making good progress across the school. Work in pupils' books shows that the majority of pupils write neatly and are taught to use different genres and styles of writing, for example diary extracts, viewpoints and recounts. However, pupils' use of grammar, spelling and punctuation is not secure and repeated errors and misconceptions are not consistently picked up and addressed by teachers. Pupils' range of vocabulary is, however, impressive. This is because more time is now being given to pupils orally rehearsing their ideas and drawing story maps to sequence events. This helps them structure their writing more effectively. The process of pupils drafting, editing and then finalising a piece of writing is well established. Teachers provide helpful feedback to indicate where pupils' ideas can be expanded to help improve the content of a piece of work. A 'help desk' is also available in some classrooms for pupils to access prompts and guides to support their writing.
- Pupils make good progress in mathematics and are becoming more adept at solving problem. Pupils were particularly enjoying the festive mathematical puzzles provided during the inspection and using their knowledge to find the value of different Christmas features. You have rightly identified that some pupils are weak in their multiplication knowledge and lack speed and confidence in mental arithmetic. The introduction of the 'frog club' is going some way towards addressing this issue, but further development is needed. Additionally, pupils are not yet secure in their use of reasoning skills to explain and depict how they reach their answers. This aspect is not yet secure across all year groups. Teachers ensure that planning covers all aspects of the mathematics curriculum and books checked show good opportunities are used to cover other areas including shape, space and measure and data handling.
- The most able pupils make good progress, particularly in reading, as they move through the school. However, on occasion, the level of challenge presented for these pupils lacks challenge, especially in writing and mathematics. Worksheets and, occasionally, too much support, restrict pupils' abilities to write independently and freely. Additionally, in some classes, pupils start with activities in mathematics which are too easy and they do not reach the more difficult challenges planned. This restricts the progress they make and prevents some working at greater depth. The most able pupils from different year groups have the opportunity to take part in workshops and activities at a local high school. Work presented is at a higher level and challenges the thinking of those who attend. This meets their needs well.
- You have used the pupil premium funding wisely to make a difference for those who are eligible for support. There are only a small number of disadvantaged pupils in the school but they make good progress. Effective support and additional intervention programmes are provided to ensure that these pupils achieve as well as others in their class. Those who are the most able disadvantaged benefit from the same opportunities afforded to other pupils of similar ability in the school. The 'children's champion' is on hand to provide good support and advice to pupils and their families. This support, together with funding of enrichment activities, including residential visits, swimming and music lessons, all add to disadvantaged pupils' well-being and academic success.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress

due to the support they receive. Again, there are only a small number in the school but their individual needs are well catered for. Extra support is provided during lessons or through one-to-one teaching. This ensures that these pupils achieve as well as they should. Additional external services are accessed where needed.

- The majority of children join the early years with skills and knowledge which are typical for their age. Children make good progress because of the good-quality care and support they receive from all adults. The addition of the school nursery in 2012, which now accepts two-year-olds, is leading to children making accelerated progress because children have a longer time to develop their early basic skills. The proportion of children reaching a good level of development is now in line with the national average and considerably higher than at the time of the previous inspection. This is because you and your leadership team have focused on improvements in early years. However, girls achieve above boys in most areas, including reading, writing and mathematics. Induction processes are well established and this ensures that children settle quickly in Nursery and Reception classes. There is a good balance of adult-led activities and activities children choose for themselves. This ensures that children develop different skills.
- Attainment at the end of key stage 1 is above average over time. Provisional information for 2016 shows that it was above average in reading, writing and mathematics for those working at greater depth. Key stage 2 attainment is usually above average, but in 2016, the proportion of Year 6 pupils working at greater depth in mathematics and grammar, punctuation and spelling was below average. Current pupils are making good progress, as seen by the work in their books.
- Pupils behave well and are polite and respectful. They thoroughly enjoy school and this is shown in their above-average attendance. As one pupil put it, ' I used to hide in the car when I went to my last school, but now I jump out and run in to meet my friends.' Healthy living is strongly promoted and all pupils, including those in the early years, are taught the importance of a healthy diet and regular exercise. They also understand the importance of sleep and relaxation to maintain good mental health. The curriculum is greatly enriched through clubs and trips and this adds significantly to pupils' enjoyment of school. The culture for sport and outdoor learning is strong.
- Pupils have a good understanding of other cultures and those with different religious beliefs as these are taught well. They know what British values are and can talk confidently how democracy operates and how it is applied in their own school to elect school council members. They are welcoming and supportive towards new pupils who join the school. You and your staff ensure that pupils are listened to and involved in decision making, for example through the school council or sports crew. Pupils are mature, kind and considerate and readily take on additional responsibilities, for example looking after younger pupils.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that teaching:

- raises achievement of boys in the early years so that they achieve as well as girls

- challenges pupils at all levels, especially the most able
- develops pupils' grammar, punctuation and spelling skills in order to accelerate and improve their writing further
- promotes greater use of mental arithmetic and reasoning skills to enable more pupils to be working at greater depth in mathematics.

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

Yours sincerely

Heather Simpson
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Lines of enquiry pursued during this inspection focused on:

- the quality of provision in the early years, especially for boys
- achievement in writing for pupils in key stage 2
- the level of challenge for the most able pupils in mathematics in key stage 2
- how well funding is used to support disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities
- the effectiveness of safeguarding procedures.

During the inspection, I met with you, members of your leadership team and five members of the governing body. I spoke to an external consultant, whom you commissioned to support leaders and managers, by telephone. I discussed the work of the school with you, including the processes and procedures in place for safeguarding. I visited all classrooms, spoke with pupils about their learning and looked at the work in their books. I listened to pupils read and met with older pupils to gather their views about the school.

I looked at a range of school documents, including and the school's information about pupils' achievement and attendance. I also reviewed the school's own evaluation of its work, together with the school development plan. I took account of the 38 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. Parent text messages were also considered and additional information collected from parents at the end of the school day. There were nine responses to the staff questionnaire and 13 responses to the pupil questionnaire. Views expressed by parents, staff and pupils were considered.