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Mrs Karen Bilner
Stratford St Mary Primary School
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Dear Mrs Bilner

Short inspection of Stratford St Mary Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 18 January 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 February 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. When you took up post as headteacher in September 2015, you identified several improvements that were required to ensure that the school remained good when next inspected. Since this time, you and your staff have worked tirelessly to improve many aspects of the school. For example, a new behaviour policy has been introduced. The curriculum has been greatly enriched. Lively and interesting activities promote pupils' high levels of engagement. They develop their collaborative, creative and independent skills. For example, Year 1 and Year 2 pupils showed great enthusiasm when writing about a recent trip to the pantomime. Children in the Reception Year delighted in the creative activities their teacher had planned around the story of Little Red Riding Hood.

You place a strong emphasis on developing pupils' physical and mental well-being. Sport is an important part of day-to-day life in school. You are right to be proud of the Sportsmark Gold award achieved as a result. Pupils enjoy the wide variety of choice offered in after-school clubs including for cookery, music and sport. They also appreciate the opportunities they have to take part in a range of sporting tournaments. These help pupils to develop their teamwork skills, and the friendships that older children make with pupils from other schools help to prepare them for the next stage in their education. The school's reputation as a good school has spread and consequently numbers on roll have increased.

Parents are effusive in their praise for all aspects of the school, including the leadership of the headteacher. One commented, 'Stratford St Mary is a very warm,

nurturing and friendly school. The staff work extremely hard to ensure that each child achieves their potential both academically and socially.' The warm and caring atmosphere ensures that pupils feel very safe. Older pupils look after younger pupils, for example, through organising play activities at break and lunchtimes. They also provide leadership through the school council and eco council and as junior road safety officers. Pupils enjoy coming to school and this is reflected in their high levels of attendance.

The small size of the school means that teachers know all pupils very well and plan work to meet their individual needs within the mixed-age classes. Consequently, the very small number of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are disadvantaged have their needs well met and make good progress from their starting points.

You have an accurate picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses and clear plans are in place to improve the school further. You know that you need to develop the leadership roles of the newly appointed subject leaders. You agree that there is work to be done to ensure that more pupils exceed expectations at the end of both key stages. You also acknowledge that you need to ensure that the early years prepares children for all aspects of the Year 1 curriculum. Your school improvement plan includes these areas for development.

Safeguarding is effective.

The culture of safeguarding in the school is robust. As the designated safeguarding lead, you ensure that all staff receive regular, up-to-date training so they know their duties, including, for example, what to do if they believe a pupil may be at risk of radicalisation. You take appropriate steps to ensure that rigorous vetting procedures are followed for all adults who work in the school. Safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality.

Pupils feel safe and have a good understanding of how to keep safe. This is because the curriculum provides regular and appropriate opportunities for them to learn how to keep safe, including when using the internet. Pupils are confident that if they have any worries adults will deal with them effectively. They understand that different types of bullying exist but those spoken to say they have never experienced any bullying at school.

Inspection findings

- All staff share your vision and high expectations for pupils' achievement. They appreciate your leadership and are proud of the progress the school has made since you arrived. They welcome the feedback they receive about their performance and the training and development opportunities you provide, including working with other schools in the local area.
- Governance arrangements have been strengthened since your arrival. There are good procedures in place to enable governors to analyse tracking information and ask probing questions if they have any concerns. Consequently, governors

have a deep understanding of the school's work and know where to target their support and challenge.

- To ascertain that the school has remained good, one of my key lines of enquiry was about pupils' progress in writing from key stage 1 to key stage 2. Test results in 2016 suggested that a few pupils, including some who were disadvantaged, did not make enough progress in key stage 2. We discussed these individual pupils in detail. The school's own assessment information showed that these pupils had made better progress than suggested by the external assessment information. We also agreed that the small numbers of pupils in each cohort mean that all such information must be interpreted carefully.
- During visits to classrooms we looked at current pupils' writing. There are a range of interesting writing opportunities across the curriculum. Work is presented neatly and progress in writing is visible in pupils' books across all year groups. This includes the very small number currently on roll who are disadvantaged. Pupils respond well to teachers' marking, editing their work to improve it and there is evidence that some are on track to reach greater depth.
- My second line of enquiry was about mathematics. This was a key area for improvement from the previous inspection report. You were right to be pleased with the good progress made by pupils in key stage 1. The progress that pupils made across key stage 2 was in line with that seen nationally.
- You have acted to strengthen the teaching of mathematics. There is evidence of more challenge in mathematics through the introduction of challenge cards. Mastery activities are being developed.
- Teachers are making better use of assessment and putting in appropriate interventions where they identify that pupils' progress is slowing. You have appointed subject leaders for both English and mathematics to lead sustained development in these areas. You agreed with me that these leaders need further support to enable them to drive their subjects effectively. You also agreed that more of the most able pupils should be expected to exceed age-related expectations.
- My third line of enquiry was about pupils' progress in key stage 1. This is because most start Year 1 having reached a good level of development at the end of the Reception Year. Work in books suggests pupils are making good progress this year and more will reach higher levels at the end of key stage 1. More accurate assessment is enabling identification of those who need intervention to achieve age-related expectations and beyond.
- We discussed how successfully the nurturing environment of the early years prepares children for the demands of key stage 1. You agreed that you need to further embed transition activities to ensure that children are fully prepared for their next steps.
- My final line of enquiry was about how well the school meets the needs of the small number of disadvantaged pupils. We scrutinised the work of all disadvantaged pupils who are currently in the school and agreed that they are making good progress from their various starting points.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that the quality of teaching and learning and outcomes for pupils continue to improve by:

- providing training for the new subject leaders for mathematics and English to enable them to drive development in their subject areas effectively
- ensuring that more pupils achieve outcomes which exceed age-related expectations at the end of each key stage
- further developing transition activities between the early years and key stage 1 to ensure that all children are ready for the demands of the Year 1 curriculum.

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

Yours sincerely

Joan Beale
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, all teachers and five members of the governing body. I also met with a representative from the local authority. I listened to pupils reading and spoke with them formally and informally during breaktimes and in lessons. We visited all classrooms together to observe teaching and learning and work in pupils' books. I looked in detail at the work in books of all disadvantaged pupils.

I scrutinised safeguarding policies and practice. I considered a wide range of other documentation, including the school's own evaluation and plans for improvement and external monitoring reports. I also took account of 53 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View) and spoke with several parents when they were bringing their children to school.