

22 January 2018

Mr Les Ball
Acting Headteacher
Stiperstones CofE Primary School
Snailbeach
Shrewsbury
Shropshire
SY5 0LZ

Dear Mr Ball

Short inspection of Stiperstones CofE Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 10 January 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 September 2012.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection.

There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness of good as a result of this inspection.

Stiperstones CofE Primary School is part of a federation with Chirbury CofE Primary School. You have been acting headteacher of both of these schools in the absence of the substantive executive headteacher since early 2017. You are also headteacher of Norbury Primary School, a local outstanding school, and divide your time appropriately. The previous headteacher left the federation in November 2017 and you will continue to be acting headteacher until a permanent leadership structure is established.

Since the last inspection there has been a great deal of change in leadership and in teaching staff, particularly in key stage 1. The school now has greater stability in the teaching staff but the current arrangements for leadership are temporary. The local authority and governors have identified establishing a substantive leadership structure in order to secure a sustainable future for the school as a key priority.

Stiperstones CofE Primary School is an improving school but further improvements are still required. Since becoming acting headteacher, you have used your clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses to address key issues to improve the school. Aply supported by the teacher-in-charge, all staff and the

developing governing body, you have ensured that the school is now well led and managed.

It is clear that you have the confidence of all staff, parents and pupils in your drive to improve the quality of education pupils receive. Staff say that you are an inspirational leader and you have created a supportive, vibrant working environment in which they feel they can help pupils to thrive. You have challenged underperformance and made difficult decisions. You have recognised and fostered the leadership potential of existing members of staff and appointed new teachers. As a result, pupils are now receiving a better quality of education.

Governance is improving. Following a review, governors have a greater awareness of their responsibilities and how they can support you in your drive for improvement. They have correctly identified what they need to do to improve and have put in place the necessary training and development plans. However, strategic planning and systems for monitoring current provision are not fully developed. The governing body has also not ensured that the school's website meets requirements. Additionally, governors did not offer enough challenge to school leaders in the past as they did not hold leaders to close enough account for inconsistent teaching and outcomes over time.

The local authority has provided good-quality support and challenge to the school and the link officer knows the school well. Local authority staff have helped the governing body improve, they have brought in a local headteacher to provide additional support and they commissioned you as the acting headteacher of the Chirbury and Stiperstones CofE federation. However, as leadership capacity has increased in the school, the local authority is beginning to provide less support.

The local authority officer and leaders in the school have correctly identified that early years provision needs further development. The curriculum and the environment are not inspiring and outdoor learning is underused. The quality of teaching of the youngest children is not improving as rapidly as it is for older pupils in key stage 1.

Teaching is improving throughout the school. Staff are now using accurate assessment information to plan activities to help pupils make better progress than they did in the past. There is more challenge for different groups of pupils in the mixed-age classes. However, at times, the most able pupils complete activities that are too easy for them and those who find the work more difficult are given tasks that they are unable to complete without considerable assistance. This slows the progress that these pupils make.

As a result of inconsistent teaching in the past, many pupils have gaps in their knowledge, skills and understanding. Staff are aware of this and plan activities to help pupils to catch up. This is having a positive impact but too many pupils are not yet reaching the high standards of which they are capable.

Pupils have been given individual targets in subjects including mathematics. However, as assessment information was not accurate in the past, these have not always been realistic and have not helped pupils to achieve well. Outcomes have been inconsistent over time.

Staff are keen to improve their practice and value the development opportunities that they have been given recently. Staff at all levels are benefiting from training opportunities with other staff within the federation, from Norbury Primary School and beyond. However, you have correctly identified that continued professional development for all staff is a priority in order to ensure that recent improvements are sustained.

Pupils enjoy coming to school. They are punctual and attendance is consistently in line with the national average. Pupils behave very well. Older children look after younger ones and include them in their games during social time. Pupils play enthusiastically but with consideration on the playground. They are polite and enjoy the range of responsibilities that they are given in school.

Pupils usually behave very well in class and support the learning of other pupils. Occasionally, when activities do not interest them, a very few pupils become disengaged but they do not disrupt the learning of others. Pupils value the rewards that they are given and sanctions are rarely needed. There have been no exclusions for over five years.

Pupils' understanding of fundamental British values and other beliefs and cultures is not fully developed but they are kind and considerate to others in the school. Pupils, parents and staff all agree that bullying is extremely rare and pupils are confident that staff would help them resolve any problems if they arise.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. The site is secure and appropriate checks are in place for visitors.

Processes are clear and concerns are followed up appropriately. Referrals are timely and outside agencies are used effectively. Procedures to recruit, select and check staff are thorough and the school's single central record is compliant.

Pupils are taught to stay safe in an age-appropriate way. They learn about online safety and they are taught about road safety. Pupils who spoke with inspectors had a clear understanding of how to keep themselves safe from potential risks. They said that they feel safe and staff and parents believe that pupils are safe in the school.

Inspection findings

- The curriculum is broad and balanced and provides opportunities for pupils to study a wide range of subjects. Pupils develop their reading, writing,

mathematical and communication skills in different subjects and learning in the classroom is now supported by high-quality trips and visits.

- The curriculum also contributes well to pupils' positive behaviour and well-being. However, the early years curriculum is underdeveloped and pupils of all ages do not have a thorough grasp of the term 'fundamental British values' or a deep understanding of other beliefs and cultures. Leaders are aware of this and have plans in place to improve this aspect of pupils' learning.
- Teaching is improving but, over time, it has been consistently stronger in key stage 2 than in key stage 1. Staff now work well together throughout the school and pupils usually show high levels of engagement when tackling purposeful activities which build upon their prior learning. Assessment information is now accurate. It is carefully checked in the school and with staff from other schools and, where it is used well, it is informing activities that help pupils make faster progress. However, where teaching is less effective, many pupils complete the same tasks, learning is not moved on quickly enough and assessment information is not used to inform tasks to challenge the most able pupils. Additionally, pupils with low prior attainment are sometimes given activities that they find too difficult and cannot complete without considerable help from adults.
- Outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics have been inconsistent over time. Most pupils usually attain well at the end of key stage 2 but progress information, weakened by poor assessment practice in the past, does not indicate strong progress from the end of key stage 1. However, this is beginning to improve.
- In 2017, key stage 2 pupils made faster progress in reading and writing than in mathematics. Year 6 pupils have achieved consistently well in reading and current pupils are making improved progress across the curriculum. However, outcomes in writing and mathematics have varied over time.
- Key stage 1 outcomes in reading and writing did not match those in mathematics in 2017 and standards in phonics declined. Leaders have identified the teaching of phonics as an area for development and improvements are now evident. Effective interventions are helping current pupils reach the expected standard. However, as a result of inconsistent teaching in the past, some pupils have considerable gaps in their wider knowledge, skills and understanding.
- The current leadership team is taking effective action to improve the school but a substantive leadership structure is not in place.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- a substantive and sustainable leadership structure is put in place
- improvements in teaching, learning and assessment are embedded in order to secure consistently strong outcomes for all pupils by:

- continuing to provide professional development opportunities for all staff
- ensuring that all staff use accurate assessment information to plan activities that challenge pupils to make rapid progress from their different starting points
- staff take further action to fill the gaps in pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding
- developing the early years provision
- pupils' understanding of fundamental British values and beliefs and cultures that are different to their own is strengthened
- governors' capacity for strategic planning and improving their systems for monitoring current provision is further developed
- the school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

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

Yours sincerely

Simon Mosley
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

- Meetings were held with you, the teacher-in-charge of the school and most staff. Six responses to the staff questionnaire were also considered.
- The lead inspector spoke to four governors, including the chair of the governing body, and the local authority officer linked to the school.
- Short visits were made to both classes on the morning and afternoon of the inspection. The inspector spoke to pupils formally and informally and observed behaviour at the start of the day, in lessons and during social time.
- Sixteen responses and seven free-text comments on Parent View were taken into account. The lead inspector also spoke to parents at the start of the day and considered an email from a parent.
- Various school documents were scrutinised, including the school's self-evaluation and information about pupils' progress, behaviour, attendance and safety. Documents relating to safeguarding were checked and the inspector looked at published information on the school's website.