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Mr Paul Freear
Headteacher
Comberton Primary School
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Dear Mr Freear

Short inspection of Comberton Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 5 July 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 May 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You provide clear and focused leadership and have identified precisely where there are strengths and where further improvements can be made. You are ably supported by good leaders who share your passion for improving teaching and learning. You have created a strong and united staff team that is committed to improving its practice to ensure that every pupil achieves their full potential. As a result, staff morale is high and the climate for learning is very positive. Staff survey results returned show that staff are proud to work at Comberton Primary.

There has been considerable change since the previous inspection. You were appointed as headteacher in September 2015 and you have restructured the leadership team so that more leaders carry responsibility for school improvement. Almost half of the teaching staff have joined the school since the previous inspection, and the governing body has been reconstituted with 50% of governors new to their roles since September 2015. Staff and governors have embraced the changes made and, together, you have successfully set about improving the quality of teaching and raising achievement.

The issues from the previous inspection have been addressed. These issues included raising achievement of middle-ability pupils and ensuring that teachers set sufficiently demanding work for all groups and check pupils' work more often. Leaders were also required to improve the feedback provided by teachers in their marking and to monitor the quality of teaching more sharply. You and your

leadership team have rigorously checked and monitored the quality of teaching across the school and taken steps to successfully address any weaknesses. You have provided high-quality training and support to help teachers improve their practice. Visits to classrooms and work examined in pupils' books during the inspection show that teachers plan suitably challenging tasks, systematically check pupils' learning during lessons and provide detailed and clear guidance to help pupils improve their work. As a result of staff training and individual teacher feedback following monitoring, the quality of teaching has improved this year, as has the achievement of pupils in all ability groups.

You recognise that there is still work to do, especially in closing the gaps in achievement between boys and girls and accelerating pupils' progress in writing. You have made good in-roads to these aspects already. Your analysis of data focuses sharply on identifying any gaps in learning, helping you to speed up the progress of boys and improve the quality of pupils' writing. Interventions are quickly put in place to help pupils catch up and not only reach the standards expected, but exceed them.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your deputy headteacher have created a strong culture of safeguarding and protecting children from harm. All staff and governors have received training in child protection and safeguarding issues, including preventing pupils from radicalisation and extremism. As a result, staff know what to do if they have a concern about a pupil, and referrals are made by the deputy headteacher to appropriate external agencies if needed. The school site is safe and secure. Visitors are provided with safeguarding information on arrival and required to sign in before being allowed into the main foyer. Safer recruitment procedures are followed meticulously to ensure that all staff have been vetted and allowed to work with children. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality.

Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe in lessons, assemblies and through curriculum activities such as anti-bullying workshops, internet safety week and 'Bikeability'. Pupils say they feel safe and understand different forms of bullying, including cyber bullying, and how social media sites and mobile telephones can be used inappropriately. Pupils and parents say there are very few incidents of bullying but that, if reported, staff deal with instances quickly and effectively. Pupils are confident to talk to teachers or other adults at school if they have any problems or worries. All parents who expressed their views agree that their children feel safe at school.

Inspection findings

- The strength of your leadership is your honest and accurate evaluation of the quality of teaching and detailed analysis of assessment information. This gives you and your leaders a clear overview of where strengths and areas for improvement lie. You have formulated a clear and comprehensive action plan to tackle areas that are not as good as you want them to be. Information gathered

and action plans are shared widely with all staff and governors. Termly evaluations enable all groups to see which actions are successful and where further work is needed. This level of monitoring allows you to readily adjust planned actions during the course of the year, if needed, in order to maximise impact.

- You and your leadership team carry out regular checks on the quality of teaching. You know the importance of checking pupils' work over time to determine whether standards are improving and pupils are making good progress. You have set high expectations and instilled in staff the need to only accept good-quality work which is well presented. Members of your leadership team carry out their roles effectively and provide good levels of support for colleagues, despite some being new to their roles. You readily agree that subject leaders' own good practice can be shared more widely to further strengthen teaching and accelerate progress even more.
- Together with your leadership team, you have introduced a new assessment system which enables you to track the progress of all year groups and different groups of pupils in reading, writing and mathematics. You analyse this information systematically and have identified gaps, particularly between boys' and girls' achievement in reading and writing in several year groups. This has rightly been identified as a school priority, and you are taking steps to address this. Interventions are provided to ensure that pupils who are at risk of falling behind receive good support from class teachers or teaching assistants. These interventions are monitored well by your deputy headteacher and tracked carefully. Evidence shows that they are having a good impact on helping pupils to catch up and achieve as well as their peers.
- Governors are increasingly involved in gathering first-hand evidence in order to check the accuracy of information provided. They meet with leaders of key stages and subjects to discuss actions taken, visit classrooms and look at pupils' books. Minutes of governors' meetings show that they ask challenging questions and hold leaders to account. You provide them with clear and comprehensive information about all aspects of the school, including staffing, finance, premises and pupils' achievement. As a result, governors are well informed and support you in the leadership of the school.
- Children get off to a good start in the early years. Most join Nursery or Reception classes ready to learn and make good progress. The proportion of children reaching a good level of development has increased steadily over four years and is now above the national average. This is because teachers plan exciting activities, which build on their early skills. For example, children enjoyed writing about their recent visit to Warwick Castle in their books and on computers. Although teachers incorporate boy-friendly topics, for example the space station and castle role-play areas in classrooms, boys achieve less well than girls in most aspects. Although new to post, the early years leader has already identified where improvements can be made to engage boys more and accelerate their progress.
- Teachers cater for the needs of different ability groups well. Teachers have good subject knowledge and explain tasks clearly, so that pupils know precisely what they have to do. Marking has improved considerably since the previous

inspection and is effective. Teachers show what pupils need to include in their work and how it should be presented through 'wagoll' (what a good one looks like) walls. As a result, pupils understand tasks set, know what must be included and the standard required.

- You have rightly identified writing as a whole-school focus this year. Handwriting is taught well and most pupils use a neat and cursive style, including those in key stage 1. Pupils are imaginative in their writing and use good vocabulary. However, they have not developed secure spelling strategies and this detracts from the quality of their writing. Occasionally, teachers present boys with tasks that do not motivate them to write. For example, picture stimuli used of a Disney princess did not enthuse boys. Consequently, their writing lacked imagination and sentences became repetitive rather than varied in content and structure.
- You have ensured that pupils' personal development and well-being are given equal attention to their academic achievement. The school values of respect, responsibility, tolerance, collaboration, perseverance and determination underpin the school's ethos. Pupils understand what these values represent. Pupils behave well and have a very good understanding of the behaviour policy and the sanctions and rewards linked to the behaviour zone boards in all classrooms. Pupils are punctual to lessons and their attendance is above average. This is because effective systems are in place to follow up pupil absences. You have been very successful in reducing the proportion of persistent absence this year, especially for disadvantaged pupils.
- Pupils enjoy the wide range of opportunities which school provides. Breakfast and after-school club are well attended and provide valuable out-of-school support for parents and exciting activities for pupils. You have ensured that pupils know the importance of healthy lifestyles and have made good use of the sports funding to provide an extensive range of sporting clubs and equipment, such as pogo sticks and skipping ropes to add to pupils' physical fitness and enjoyment at playtimes. The designated sports member of staff also develops pupils' sports skills at breaktimes, thus capitalising on every opportunity to encourage pupils to be active. Visits, visitors and drama opportunities also help to enrich the curriculum. Key stage 2 pupils talked with great enthusiasm about their recent performances at the local Rose Theatre in front of their parents. However, pupils feel that they do not have enough opportunities to use computers in different subjects and would like to use these more than once a week in subjects such as mathematics and science. Inspection evidence confirms that there is limited evidence of pupils' computing skills in their work.
- Outcomes for pupils are improving. There is a rising trend in the proportion of pupils reaching the expected level in the national Year 1 screening check on phonics (letters and the sounds they make). Results in the last four years have been above average. In 2015, standards at the end of key stage 1 recovered, having dipped in 2013 and 2014, and were in line with the national average. Standards at the end of key stage 2 were in line with the national average. However, results released during the inspection show that attainment in 2016 at the end of key stage 2 is now above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. The school's own information shows that most current pupils

are working in line with age-related expectations and that they are making good progress. In some year groups, however, boys' achievement is lower than girls', especially in reading and writing. You and your leadership team are keen to reduce these gaps and have good plans in place to do so.

- Parents have very positive views of the school. They are particularly pleased with the leadership you provide as headteacher and feel that you have moved the school forward since your appointment. They feel that teaching overall is good and that their children make good progress. Parents agree that their children are safe and happy. As one parent put it, 'My child goes in to school happy and comes out happy.' Another stated, 'My child loves attending this school; the teachers are so friendly and always willing to help.'

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers provide stimulating activities for boys so that they achieve as well as girls in all key stages
- spelling strategies are taught well and pupils apply these in order to improve the quality of their writing, especially in key stage 2
- the use of computing is developed across the curriculum to further develop pupils' literacy, numeracy and research skills
- subject and key stage leaders continue to work with colleagues to raise the quality of teaching even further.

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

Yours sincerely

Heather Simpson
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this one-day inspection, I met with you, all members of your leadership team and several members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. I discussed the work of the school with you and carried out some short visits to a selection of classes. I looked at pupils' work and spoke to them about their learning. I also spoke informally to pupils about behaviour and how they learn how to keep themselves safe. I observed pupils' behaviour at break and lunchtime as well as in lessons. I looked at a range of school documents including the checks on staff's suitability to work with children, the minutes of governors' meetings and the school's information about pupils' progress, attainment, behaviour and attendance. I took account of the 44 responses to Parent View, together with comments made by

parents when collecting their children from school. The views of 18 staff were taken account of through the staff survey. There were no responses to the pupils' online survey to consider.