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Amanda Willis
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Dear Mrs Willis

Short inspection of Stanford in the Vale Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 12 September 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.

Leaders and governors have maintained a good and improving quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have forged a strong senior leadership team whose members are all very ambitious for the pupils in your care, and passionate to improve the quality of provision at Stanford. Together, you provide very clear and effective leadership which is recognised and valued by pupils, staff, parents and the local authority. Pupils and parents are rightly proud of the school and all that it achieves, and contributes, at the heart of the village community. As one parent said:

'The school, its ethos, its teachers and the education that is provided to our children, is nothing short of spectacular. In a rural setting where the school plays a fundamental part of village life, our children are taught, from their first day, the importance of respect and kindness and to enjoy learning in a fun environment.'

Leaders and governors have been particularly successful in working with a local charity and the 'Friends of Stanford School' to make improvements to the school's grounds. The early years outdoor area, and the wide range of play equipment in the playground and school field, offer first-class learning and play areas which are relished by the children and a real credit to you and the village. Stanford School offers a particularly nurturing and inclusive community. From Reception Year onwards, the habits of good learning are established through the strong

relationships that are fostered between staff and pupils. Older pupils are proud to support younger ones through becoming play leaders or peer mediators. As a result, pupils gain confidence, are articulate and display highly positive attitudes towards learning, their school and each other. Pupils apply themselves diligently to the tasks they are given and take pride in their work and achievements. One parent commented: 'I am always impressed by the way they encourage even the quietest children to participate in the whole class assemblies which seems invaluable in building confidence and class cohesiveness.' Several parents were keen to share their views as to how well they believe your school prepared their older children for secondary school.

During your school's last inspection, the inspector recognised many strengths, including: the high quality of teaching; the involvement of pupils in the planning of topics to capture their interest; pupils' good behaviour; and the support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. These continue to be key strengths of the school. The inspector also identified a need to increase the progress that all pupils, particularly the most able, make in writing and for teachers to give pupils more opportunities to be independent in their learning. Leaders and governors have responded well to these areas for improvement. Implementing a school-wide focus on developing pupils' storytelling skills has enabled them to become more independent in their extended and creative writing. However, you are aware that more still needs to be done to improve pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar skills and to continue to improve the level of challenge for the most able pupils across the curriculum.

Governors are a professional and dedicated team with a detailed understanding of the school. They are kept well informed through regular visits to the school and via leaders' detailed tracking and assessment information. Your school's self-evaluation and improvement planning are robust, have clear targets and are appropriately focused. You have identified the correct priorities for further improvement and are taking the right actions to achieve them. You have prioritised raising standards in writing and mathematics and are aware that there is more to be done to ensure greater consistency of challenge, particularly for the most able pupils. While you have improved curriculum planning in English and mathematics, there is more to do to ensure that there are increasing demands made on pupils in science and the wider curriculum.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are robust and that there are well-understood systems in place to manage safeguarding requirements. There is a culture of vigilance and the school's records are carefully maintained, detailed and of high quality. All staff have up-to-date training to an appropriate level so they know what to do should they be worried about a pupil. Governors are very knowledgeable about safeguarding and ensure that this aspect of the staff's work is given high priority and meets current requirements. The school's website is professional, up to date, meets the government's reporting requirements, and

contains a wealth of useful information for parents, including much that relates to safeguarding and the promotion of equalities.

Overall, pupils' attendance is above the national average. You recognise that some groups of pupils, including the disadvantaged, had poor attendance rates in the past. The school has worked closely with outside agencies to support improvements, but leaders are aware that more detailed monitoring of the attendance of groups would enable better targeting of limited resources.

Bullying and discrimination are rare and pupils report that they know how to keep themselves safe, including when on the internet. Pupils know who to go to should they have any concerns and trust staff to resolve them. All staff and parents agree and report that pupils feel safe and well looked after at Stanford in the Vale School. As some of the pupils told me during this inspection, 'The best thing about our school is that we all get along well,' and 'We make friends easily here.'

Inspection findings

- During this visit, as well as evaluating safeguarding arrangements, I focused on specific aspects of the school's provision, including:
 - the progress pupils make in Reception, particularly in mathematics and the expressive arts, and how effectively children progress into key stage 1
 - whether the dip in the 2017 key stage 2 results, published on the school website, particularly for writing, is indicative of current pupils' progress
 - how effectively leaders are ensuring that the attendance of vulnerable pupils is continuing to improve
 - the quality of learning in the wider curriculum.
- Leaders and governors have worked with the local community to reorganise and improve the quality of provision for the Reception Year. Consequently, the indoor and outdoor environments offer a wealth of well-organised, rich and stimulating learning opportunities. Children gain confidence from their good relationships with staff and collaborative play with others in their class. They make good progress and develop communication and literacy skills that prepare them well for key stage 1. Improved planning has enhanced the provision in mathematics and expressive arts.
- The high-quality teaching of phonics and useful resources provided to parents underpin the good progress that pupils make in reading. The proportion of pupils that achieve the expected standard in the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1 is in line with the national figure and nearly all pupils have achieved the expected standard by the end of Year 2. Historically, the proportions of pupils achieving the expected standard and greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 were in line with national figures. Leaders are acutely aware that the, as yet unvalidated, 2017 key stage 1 outcomes dipped significantly. Detailed analysis reveals that this is not a trend and leaders have

taken decisive action to restructure teaching and learning to ensure that these pupils are supported to catch up.

- The majority of pupils, including the most able, make strong progress in reading and writing across all years within key stage 2. Leaders have responded well to the dip in pupils' achievement in writing last year. As a result of professional development and training, the teaching of creative and extended writing in key stage 2 has improved. Teachers are now focused on rapidly improving pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar. Pupils' books provide evidence that standards of writing have improved over the past year. Leaders are aware that there is still more to do to ensure that pupils' writing continues to improve.
- Senior leaders are outward looking and enable teachers to benefit from regular collaboration with other teachers through an effective local partnership with other primary schools. The leaders of English and mathematics work well with teachers to support their professional development and improve practice across the school. The wider curriculum is enriched through a varied assortment of sporting activities, clubs, trips and visits, which are particularly valued by pupils and parents. However, pupils' books show that teachers' expectations are not as consistently high in science and the wider curriculum as they are in English and mathematics. Pupils, particularly the most able pupils in key stage 2, are not set sufficiently challenging tasks which require them to apply their writing and mathematics skills in science and the humanities. Teachers' feedback is not always sufficiently focused to ensure that pupils develop subject-specific vocabulary, knowledge and skills. Consequently, progress is not yet as strong across the curriculum as it is in English and mathematics.
- Leaders ensure the high quality of additional help for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Teachers and teaching assistants work well together to support any pupils who are falling behind. Effective assessment and tracking systems, together with timely interventions and support, ensure that these pupils make strong progress in line with their peers.
- Historically, the overall attendance rates have been above national figures because leaders have worked hard to promote the benefits of regular attendance. However, a small minority of disadvantaged pupils attend less regularly than other pupils. Leaders have instigated a range of activities to address this but there is further work to do to ensure that the attendance of this group matches that of their peers.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers continue to develop pupils' grammar, punctuation and spelling skills so that writing outcomes further improve
- all pupils, particularly the most able, are challenged in science and the humanities through the provision of more consistent opportunities for deeper

thinking, problem solving and the application of pupils' writing and mathematics skills

- there are further improvements to the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities by refining the school's monitoring systems.

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

Yours sincerely

Matthew Newberry
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, your senior leadership team, teachers and members of the governing body. I also had a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. Together, you and I visited all of the classrooms to look at teaching and learning. I looked at a range of pupils' work in their exercise books. I observed pupils' behaviour at breaktime and around the school, and had a meeting with a small group of pupils. I took into account 46 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, as well as speaking to a number of parents at the beginning of the day. I also considered the views represented in 15 responses to the staff survey and 31 responses to the pupil survey. I evaluated a range of documents, including pupils' progress information and safeguarding policies, procedures and checks.