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Mrs Katherine Gadsby
Headteacher
Stokes Wood Primary School
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Dear Mrs Gadsby

Short inspection of Stokes Wood Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 22 May 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 November 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Stokes Wood Primary School has increased significantly in size since the last inspection. It is now a larger-than-average-sized primary school and this is in no small part due to your determination to ensure that the school meets the needs of its pupils and community and, as such, its reputation is growing.

You are determined and passionate to ensure that all pupils make the best possible progress. Your passion is infectious and your staff and governors support you. You have set high expectations for staff and pupils. You provide high-quality training for staff to support them in their roles and to develop their skills. You have a very accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and these are well understood by other senior leaders and the governing body. You have developed the talents of your leadership team and they now readily take on additional responsibilities with understanding and creativity. They now more accurately understand their monitoring roles and use this understanding to support the progress of different groups of pupils.

You and the staff have ensured that Stokes Wood is a vibrant and engaging environment in which to learn. Relationships are a particular strength of the school. Pupils' social and emotional well-being is a key priority for leaders. All staff manage pupil behaviour effectively. This leads to well behaved, courteous and polite pupils who are respectful of staff, visitors and each other. Parents I spoke to were keen to point out that behaviour is good and that staff deal with issues effectively if they

arise. One parent commented that 'you can always talk to the teachers and they will help you out if you need it'.

You and your staff have created an inclusive and stimulating ethos throughout the school. Pupils readily engage in their learning and can see a clear purpose to it. They enjoy their lessons, overall attendance has improved and is now better than the national average. In all lessons we visited, the pupils paid close attention to what was being taught and were keen to live up to their teachers' expectations. The curriculum that children experience is broad, with children enjoying art and drama, together with the excellent sporting activities that the school provides. This indicates that leaders recognise the importance of the 'whole child' and want pupils to excel in not just academic areas, but all areas. As one pupil explained to me, 'Everything is made fun so you can do it in a fun way.' You have recently introduced a new system to teach reading to pupils. Although this is showing promising signs of early impact, you agree that you need to evaluate this system so that you can be sure that it is effective over the longer term.

The governing body has an accurate view of the school and know what aspects need to be improved further. Governors regularly attend school and seek the views of parents and pupils. Some governors have very specific skills that are being well utilised. In the area of safeguarding, for example, the link governor has ably supported leaders in ensuring that pupils are safe and well cared for. Governors are also confident in asking challenging questions to ensure that leaders are held to account for the performance of the school. However, leaders do not give them sufficiently precise information about the impact of different support for pupils who are, for example, disadvantaged or of lower ability.

You have dealt effectively with areas for improvement that were identified at the previous inspection. Pupils' exercise books that I looked at during my visit show that writing across different year groups has shown considerable improvement. The quality of pupils' written work is impressive, with pupils writing at length in clear cursive script from a young age, and in a variety of subjects. At the last inspection, inspectors also asked leaders to improve pupils' skills in grammar, punctuation and spelling. Achievement in these aspects, for pupils in the Year 6 cohort in 2017, was above the national average.

You have provided specific training and support to ensure that subject and key stage leaders now successfully monitor their subjects effectively to accelerate pupils' progress. All leaders share your commitment for continuous improvement.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that safeguarding is of the highest priority. All staff and governors have received training that is appropriate for their roles and is up to date. All staff are acutely aware of their responsibility to keep pupils safe in school and know how to put this into practice. A particular strength of Stokes Wood is the tenacity that you and your staff display to minimise the risk of harm to vulnerable pupils, and to support the families of these pupils. Where a concern is identified,

you respond to this promptly and ensure that actions are followed up in a timely manner. All staff understand and apply school procedures. They know what to look for to identify pupils who may be in need and take actions to support them.

Pupils say that they feel and are kept safe and that the staff will deal with any issues that they may have. Parents agree with this. Pupils say that incidents of bad behaviour or bullying are very rare but, if they do occur, staff will deal with them effectively. Pupils' knowledge of safe and unsafe situations is strong. Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe online and are taught how to develop their personal safety.

Inspection findings

- In order to check that the school remains good I followed a number of lines of enquiry. I investigated pupils' progress in writing. I looked at the impact of middle leaders on the achievement of pupils in reading, writing and mathematics. I also considered the quality of provision in the early years.
- You noted that at the end of Year 6 in 2017, while progress in reading was broadly average, pupils' attainment was below national expectations. Outcomes across the school also indicated that pupils were performing less well in this area. Leaders reviewed how well reading was taught and have implemented new approaches to the teaching of this subject. These are beginning to have a positive impact on standards. High-quality training has been provided for key staff and they are sharing this with colleagues as the new system rolls out across school. Staff have readily embraced the new approach as they can see the positive results that it is bringing about.
- Observations of pupils' reading, along with scrutiny of their written work, supported by accurate overall assessment information on current pupils, indicates that current pupils are making at least good progress. However, the new approaches are at a very early stage in their implementation and have not had their full impact. You are committed to monitoring and refining provision to ensure the best possible outcomes for pupils.
- Actions that middle leaders have taken are having a positive impact on pupils' outcomes in this area. They have identified the areas in reading that pupils are struggling with and have initiated new strategies to address these. Leaders have amended planning, identified key skills and have provided training for staff to enable them to teach these effectively. What pupils need to do next is swiftly identified and support is put in place to meet gaps in pupils' learning.
- Pupils who need to catch up with their learning are given good overall support. However, leaders do not check precisely enough which specific approaches are the most effective in helping them to do this. As a result, leaders cannot be sure that all additional funding is spent in ways that accelerate pupils' progress well.
- Children enter the school in the early years with skills that are below or well below those typically found in children of the same age. They make good overall progress. Although the percentage of children achieving a good level of development has, historically, been below the national average, recent

improvements in teaching mean that children in this year's cohort are set to leave the early years with, for example, greatly improved phonic knowledge. Additional reading activities and the 'bedtime stories' project are having a considerably positive impact. Staff are working effectively to meet children's needs and to help them know and remember more. Information available in school suggests that the proportion of pupils who are due to leave the early years with a good level of development this year may rise to be closer to the national average.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the recently introduced approach to the teaching of reading is closely monitored and evaluated to ensure that pupils make increasingly rapid progress
- the additional support that pupils receive, in order to help them catch up, is highly effective and is adjusted, where necessary, to maximise impact.

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

Yours sincerely

Ged Philbin
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection I met with you and senior leaders and shared my lines of enquiry. I met with members of the governing body, subject leaders for English and for the early years, the leader with oversight for pastoral care and a representative from the local authority. I met with a number of parents at the start of the school day. I met with staff in the school's breakfast club provision and checked that it met regulatory requirements. I considered responses of parents to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and all free-text comments, along with the school's own surveys. I also scrutinised staff responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire. We visited classes across the school together. I looked at a sample of pupils' work across all key stages. I observed children at breaktime and met with a group of Year 6 pupils to seek their opinions of the school. I studied a range of documents, including leaders' evaluation of the school's current performance and how you are planning for improvement. I took into account a number of key documents, including those for safeguarding and for pupil premium spending. I investigated how the school monitors pupil absence and whether procedures for the recruitment of staff meet current statutory requirements. I also examined the school's website to check it meets requirements on the publication of required information.