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Lucy Mawson  
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Dear Mawson

### **Short inspection of Stebbing Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 4 October 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 June 2013.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. You provide a safe, caring environment that ensures pupils develop into confident, self-assured members of the community. Parents are extremely positive in their evaluation of the school. This is evident in the many positive comments written in Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. Parents wrote about the 'well-rounded creative learning' and the 'amazing environment'. One parent commented on the 'extra-curricular diversity' that encompasses 'the forest school and the reading dog'.

You are new to headship and have worked extremely hard to ensure that the high standards of teaching, learning and pastoral support identified at the previous inspection have continued. You and your leadership team, including governors, have made sure that Stebbing Primary is an exciting and safe place to learn. Parents noted the 'nurturing and caring environment' where pupils 'felt safe and secure'. You are providing a strong ethos for staff and pupils regarding the importance of effective behaviour for learning. Pupils develop the key skills of resilience and empathy for others through daily assemblies and in the classroom. For example, I observed a pupil in assembly making links between the ways that squirrels like the challenge of collecting food and the challenges that pupils at the school embrace and relish.

Governance is strong at Stebbing Primary. The governing body has a breadth of expertise with which they both challenge and commend the school. Governors share

your ambition for the academic and social success of each pupil. Governors visit the school regularly to inform their understanding of the strengths of the school and areas for development. The governing body has well-developed links with parents, particularly in the form of the parent forum. This has been useful in helping governors to inform their discussions with you and your leadership team.

Pupils behave very well both in the classroom and around the school. They are supportive of each other within lessons. For example, I observed pupils in a Year 4/5 English class editing each other's work with a high degree of understanding and consideration. Teachers' expectations of pupils are high and pupils respond accordingly. You have ensured that pupils have access to a broad and rich curriculum. For example, pupils develop valuable skills, knowledge and understanding through regular French, sport and art lessons. Pupils also develop a critical understanding of the importance of citizenship in 21st century Britain. For example, pupils participate in elections and the Year 6 pupils listen to younger pupils read and lead the different houses in sports and social activities.

You correctly judge the early years provision to be a strength of the school. Determined leadership in the early years has ensured that children enjoy learning and make good progress. The learning environment both inside and out is well organised, bright and stimulating. The proportion of children achieving a good level of development has steadily increased and is now above the national average. This is because staff have high expectations and structure tasks to match the needs of all children.

You and your leaders take effective action where you consider improvements are required. For example, as a result of your work in improving the outdoor learning environment in Reception, the percentage of children achieving a good level of development has continued to improve. You acknowledge that there are areas in which the school can continue to improve. For example, pupils' achievements in mathematics need to continue to improve. You recognise that teachers' guidance to help pupils improve their mathematics skills requires more precision in line with school policy. You also recognise the need to continue to improve the attendance of all pupils.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Pupils told me that they felt safe and protected at Stebbing Primary School. They told me that they were confident in the teachers' ability to protect them and to make sure that the school was an enjoyable and safe place to learn. Overwhelmingly, parents who responded to Parent View evaluated the school as a safe place for their children. One parent stated that the school was 'safe and secure' where pupils can 'flourish'.

Pupils can define bullying accurately. They told me that it is extremely uncommon at the school and that if it did happen staff would act swiftly and appropriately to resolve the issue. School records confirm this to be the case.

Leaders, including governors, ensure that all statutory safeguarding checks are in place and reviewed regularly. Records, including the checks made on adults who work at the school, are carefully and securely maintained. Inspection evidence demonstrates that leaders take swift and appropriate action to protect pupils who are in need of support.

You have ensured that a strong safeguarding culture exists within the school. Adults are well trained and vigilant about keeping pupils safe. Adults follow clear reporting and recording systems regarding safeguarding concerns. All staff receive regular training and updates in safeguarding to ensure that pupils are safe at all times.

### **Inspection findings**

- To ascertain that the school remains good, one of my key lines of enquiry was about pupils' progress in mathematics. Although most pupils made progress in line with other pupils nationally, many did not make accelerated progress in 2016. You and your leadership team have focused on improving the quality of teaching and learning of mathematics across both key stages. As a consequence, pupils' progress in mathematics is improving. You and your leaders identified the key areas that pupils struggled in, such as fluency and reasoning. Drawing on the external support of the Dunmow Excellence in Education Partnership, you have reviewed the curriculum to consolidate pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding.
- You have introduced additional challenge to the mathematics curriculum, ensuring that tasks meet the needs of most pupils. You and your leadership team have embedded a clear method of assessing what pupils find difficult. This has enabled staff to plan engaging and challenging mathematics lessons. Pupils also gain independent learning skills through the tasks that teachers set in mathematics lessons. As a result, pupils' achievements have improved. However, you acknowledge that, in line with school policy, teacher guidance needs to be more precise to help pupils make more rapid progress.
- My second line of enquiry was about how leaders are ensuring that pupils receive a broad and balanced curriculum. You and your leadership team continually review the quality of the curriculum at all key stages. As a result, from Reception all pupils study French. Pupils also have the opportunity to visit France to complement their study of the language and culture. In addition, all pupils study science as a distinct subject where they have the opportunity to develop their investigative skills. You and your leadership team have ensured that the teaching of science continues to improve through external specialist support by the Ogden Trust and participation in different science projects.
- You have ensured that the curriculum provides opportunities for all pupils. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities engage well with the curriculum. Staff provide specialised support, enabling these pupils to access the curriculum through questioning and additional resources.
- Pupils have ample opportunities to develop their writing skills through writing for real audiences and for real purposes. For example, pupils correspond through

letters with pupils at their partner school in Thailand.

- Pupils also engage with a breadth of sporting activities both during school and in after-school clubs. Pupils told me how appreciative they were of the opportunities to visit places that linked with their studies, such as the Aquarium in London and the Colne Valley Victorian railway. As a result, pupils make good progress in all areas of the curriculum.
- I also sought to establish how well the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, achieve across the curriculum. The most able pupils receive additional challenge in mathematics, reading and other areas of the curriculum. You have ensured that all staff focus on developing pupils' language in all areas of the curriculum. As a result, pupils are able to use subject-specific vocabulary with increased confidence and accuracy.
- In mathematics, pupils can select tasks with increasing difficulty. As a result, the most able pupils studied challenging mathematical concepts. In English I observed pupils using sophisticated language to create an engaging description. However, you recognise the importance of improving the precision of teacher guidance so that the most able pupils make more rapid progress in mathematics.
- My final line of enquiry was about how well pupils are prepared to keep themselves safe. Pupils behave very well both in class and around the school. They understand the importance of good manners and behave respectfully and kindly towards other pupils and adults. As a consequence, there is a harmonious learning environment throughout the school.
- The curriculum helps pupils to keep themselves safe. For example, pupils learn about how to keep safe on the internet through their computing lessons and assemblies. Pupils also learn about the benefits of healthy lifestyles through their PE lessons and sports clubs.
- Although improving, you and your leadership team maintain a constant focus on the attendance of all pupils. You have introduced a range of incentives to increase pupils' attendance, such as individual awards and weekly class awards. You and your governors have also discussed the issue with parents. You recognise that pupils and parents need to be made more aware of the link between absence and achievement.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- in mathematics, teachers provide more precise guidance so that pupils make rapid progress in line with school policy
- pupils' attendance continues to improve.

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

Yours sincerely

Susan Aykin  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

- During this inspection I held meetings with you, other senior and middle leaders and a group of three governors.
- I spoke with pupils informally in classrooms and when walking around the school site. I also met formally with a group of 14 pupils.
- I visited a range of classes across Reception, key stage 1 and key stage 2.
- I undertook a scrutiny of pupils' work in their books and folders.
- I examined policies and procedures for the safeguarding of pupils along with the school's record of checks carried out on staff working at the school.
- A range of documents were analysed or discussed, including: the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans; documents relating to pupils' achievement, attendance and behaviour; minutes of governor meetings; and curriculum plans.
- I considered the views of 72 parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as 68 views that parents expressed via free text. I also looked at 28 staff views expressed via the staff questionnaire as well as 60 pupils' views.