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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
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Christian Hilton
Executive Headteacher
Shipston-on-Stour Primary School
Station Road
Shipston-on-Stour
Warwickshire
CV36 4BT

Dear Mr Hilton

Short inspection of Shipston-on-Stour Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 20 June 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 April 2013.

This school continues to be good.

As a result of the aspirational leadership of teaching and learning that you and your leaders are providing, outcomes are improving rapidly. The dip in standards in 2016 has been quickly rectified. This is because of incisive action taken to improve teaching and to build pupils' resilience in tackling questions under test conditions. You have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

In 2014, you became a multi-academy trust consisting of two schools, with a further school joining the Stour Federation Partnership in September 2015. As executive headteacher, you have strategically used the talents of all staff in leading the school forward. You have created a harmonious learning community, including parents as true partners in learning. You and your staff are working together as a highly motivated team in pursuit of the best outcomes for your pupils. This strengthens your capacity for further improvement. Your leadership of learning has improved teachers' skills of questioning, an area addressed since the last inspection. Teachers now ask questions that challenge all pupils.

The vast majority of parents are very pleased with the school. They say that the school has been most successful in developing pupils' enthusiasm for lifelong learning. You have implemented technology to help parents access their children's daily learning. You also provide plenty of information for them on how to keep their children safe online. Parents I spoke to were most appreciative of the communication that they receive, the 'open door' policy that you operate and the

warm relationships that teachers have with pupils.

You have very high expectations of both your staff and pupils. Teachers undertake evidence-based research on the best ways to achieve the highest outcomes for pupils. Teachers share this information with support staff to help them improve their practice. As a result, all staff know precisely the skills that they need to teach in order to accelerate pupils' progress. You have introduced weekly phase meetings, where pupils' barriers to learning are discussed and remedies sought to overcome them. This has resulted in the development of bespoke tracking systems which highlight the strengths and gaps in pupils' learning.

You have wisely targeted funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and for those who are disadvantaged. Interventions are tailor-made to their needs, resulting in good progress. Parents are particularly pleased with the help that you give them in accessing strategies that help with homework.

You have rightly targeted the need to improve pupils' reasoning skills in mathematics. This initiative is working better in some year groups than others. For example, some of the older pupils have started to justify their answers by writing their explanations in their exercise books. This practice is not yet consistently embedded throughout the school.

Learning in your school is vibrant and exciting, as seen by the quality of displays that celebrate pupils' achievements in a variety of subjects. Your approach to linking literacy and numeracy to a history or science topic, such as that seen in key stage 1 where pupils study superheroes and in key stage 2 where they study the function of a heart, has led to improved outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics. Through your excellent range of visits and visitors to the school, boys are actively engaged in learning. Evidence seen during the inspection supports your accurate self-evaluation that the majority of pupils are making good progress in relation to their starting points.

Pupils behave well and are interested in learning. They live the school's values of 'respect for self and others' and this has created a highly respectful learning community. You seek ways of helping pupils retain information. In order to improve mental recall in mathematics, you and your staff have designed 'Total Recall' badges, which pupils wear with pride to demonstrate their fluency with numbers. However, staff are not yet as confident as they could be with the new planning format for mathematics designed to help deepen pupils' understanding in this subject.

The early years provision is well led and managed. As a result, there has been a steady increase in the proportion of children who reach a good level of development. Children settle very well into school life and have plenty of opportunities to work both indoors and outdoors. Staff are particularly vigilant to children's needs and develop warm and trusting relationships, enabling all children to make good progress in relation to their starting points.

Last year's data showed that outcomes for disadvantaged children in the early years were lower than other pupils in reading, writing and mathematics. School records show that many of these children have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Their progress was also affected by staffing issues that have now been resolved. Current data shows that all groups of children are making good progress, especially in personal, social and emotional development. As a result, most of the children are well prepared for work in Year 1. Nevertheless, we saw in our learning walk that there are still some children who do not form their letters correctly. This prevents them from putting their ideas on paper, an area that you have identified for improvement.

You and your senior leaders have researched the best ways to improve the learning of disadvantaged pupils. Your efforts to improve mathematical fluency and reasoning, higher order reasoning skills in reading, and writing in depth across subjects are all having a positive impact on learning. Your most recent approach of using high-quality texts across the school, such as the work seen in Year 4 where Lewis Carroll's 'Alice in Wonderland' is used as a hook to develop a science topic on potions, has led to a greater proportion of these pupils deepening their learning in lessons.

Your relentless pursuit of improvement is a key characteristic of your leadership. You, your governors and senior leaders are consistently looking at ways to move the school forward. This is seen in the way that you have altered your monitoring of teaching and learning. You now give immediate feedback to teachers and you then follow up on how your recommendations are implemented in the classroom. As a result of previous inspection findings, you have redesigned your teacher observation records. These now make reference to the progress of different groups of pupils, the school development plan and teachers' standards. Analysis of staff questionnaires shows that all teachers value the help that you give them and that they believe that the school is a great place in which to work.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have created a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. One of the ways that you have done this is by introducing elements of safeguarding into the personal, social, emotional and health education curriculum. You have created robust policies and processes which are constantly updated in line with best practices adopted in schools.

A very small minority of parents said that they were not pleased with the way that the school followed up allegations of bullying. However, no evidence was found that concerns were not fully investigated. Pupils interviewed said: 'There are plenty of adults that we can go to, and if we have any issues, they are dealt with very quickly.' Pupils also told me that you have introduced many ways for them to voice their opinions on safety, both online and through the use of 'worry boxes'.

Staff are highly trained in child protection and are kept well informed of current developments in safeguarding. Senior leaders regularly check everyone's

understanding of safeguarding and know which aspects of safeguarding need to be revisited.

Concerns about pupils' welfare are dealt with swiftly and efficiently. All records are thorough and well maintained. Detailed notes are kept on any minor aspects of name-calling or bullying. You and your senior leaders follow up any issues effectively. Your pupils trust you and are, therefore, comfortable talking to you about what upsets them. As one child said, 'He is fair and he always listens.' There is detailed chronology of phone calls, actions taken and people to be contacted. Relevant information is shared with key school staff. You have created vigilance among your 'E-cadets', who help you maintain a culture of safe internet use.

You and your governors have a good understanding of the specific safeguarding concerns that relate to the context of the school. Governors execute their duties well in overseeing the effectiveness of safeguarding.

Inspection findings

- Leaders' careful analysis of assessment information leads to improvements in the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics. For example, after looking closely at last year's national test results, it was decided that teachers should place further emphasis on deepening pupils' learning through picking up on current topics in the news.
- Pupils of all abilities achieve equally well. Information from recent assessments clearly shows that pupils from low, middle and high starting points are making secure progress. This is why results are going to be better this year than last year, with nearly all Year 6 pupils reaching age-related expectations and just under a third working at greater depth in reading and writing. In mathematics, almost half of these pupils are working at greater depth.
- Good attitudes and learning behaviours contribute to good progress. Pupils enjoy learning because, in their words, everything 'links together'. They appreciate the many opportunities they have to share their views on a range of topics. For example, in order to develop their skills of persuasive writing, pupils in Year 6 researched the pros and cons of xenotransplantation. They went on to explore the moral dilemma as to whether animal organs should be used to prolong human life. This approach to linking learning with real-life dilemmas is having a positive impact on the learning of all groups of pupils and contributes well to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The pupil premium funding is being spent effectively. The money has been spent on appropriate interventions and the purchase of resources, such as dictionaries and thesauri, which pupils use regularly in lessons. As a result, nearly three quarters of disadvantaged pupils in each year group are now working at greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics.
- You and your leaders know your pupils well and can confidently talk about their individual needs. Evidence gathered from the special educational needs coordinator shows that pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported in their learning and make good progress. As a

result, they are well prepared for their next stage in education.

- Most children in the Reception classes are acquiring the basic skills of reading, writing and mathematics and making good gains in learning. This includes those eligible for pupil premium funding. However, there are missed opportunities for some children to learn how to form their letters correctly. This is an area that your early years leader has identified for improvement. Further up the school, there are some pupils who continue to use badly formed letters when writing.
- Outcomes in reading have improved. Year-on-year, scores in the phonics screening test for Year 1 pupils are rising and are above those seen nationally. This is having a very positive impact on pupils' reading skills as all pupils can confidently tackle new words.
- The school is currently focusing on developing pupils' skills of mathematical reasoning. The recently introduced approach to planning mathematics lessons has enabled teachers to design lessons in which pupils can explore, clarify, practice, extend and review learning. You have, correctly, identified that this approach is not yet consistently applied throughout the school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- more opportunities are provided for children in the Reception classes, and for those higher up the school who still have difficulties, to improve their skills in letter formation
- there is consistency across the school in ensuring that pupils develop their skills of reasoning in mathematics.

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

Yours sincerely

Bogusia Matusiak-Varley
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with the following people: the senior leadership team, including the special educational needs coordinator; the literacy and numeracy subject leaders; and the early years foundation stage leader. I met with five governors, including the chair of governors. I spoke to eight parents, analysed 89 parental questionnaires, including 50 written comments. I also analysed 36 responses from staff. I held interviews with three pupils from Year 2 and two pupils from Year 6. I also heard these pupils read and held a discussion with them on how safe they feel in the school and what progress they make in their learning.

I reviewed a range of documentation pertaining to self-evaluation, safeguarding, pupils' progress and attendance records.

I conducted a series of lesson observations with you. We visited the two Reception classes and Years 1, 2, 5 and 6. We scrutinised pupils' work in books and spoke to pupils during lessons.