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Mr Wilken
Headteacher
The William Amory Primary School
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Dear Mr Wilken

Short inspection of The William Amory Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 17 October 2017 with Sue Cameron HMI, 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 January 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

You and leaders have effectively led improvements in the school. Pupils benefit from a rich and engaging curriculum that pays careful attention to their academic and personal development. Pupils enjoy a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities. As many as 40 pupils are in the school's key stage 2 choir and the school football team is currently top of the local league.

Pupils are very proud of their school and are keen to tell visitors about their learning. They raised no concerns about any aspects of the school during the inspection. The school is calm and ordered because pupils' behaviour and manners are exceptional.

Parents are equally happy. Many took the time to respond to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. The vast majority of respondents stated that they would recommend the school to another parent. Some parents also submitted additional comments about the school. Typical comments included: 'The school is a welcoming environment, it's lovely to see that teachers know all of the children, and everyone seems very happy', and, 'The extra curriculum activities are invaluable and teach additional skills to the children'.

The governing body has recently taken responsibility for the management of the Nursery provision and before-and-after-school club. This provision was formerly called 'The Care and Fun Club' and was inspected separately. The Nursery is now integrated with the school's early years foundation stage. Children enjoy their time in the early years and get off to an excellent start to their learning journey at William Amory.

At the last inspection, the school was asked to improve pupils' achievement and to make more teaching outstanding by ensuring that learning is challenging, pupils' independence is promoted and other leaders take more responsibility for checking the quality of teaching and helping to improve it.

Your effective leadership has enabled the school to make progress in all of the areas set out in the last inspection. The level of challenge is broadly strong across the school. Teachers' planning takes account of the different needs of children. Inspectors observed several effective examples of teachers adjusting activities and posing questions to take learning to the next level. This approach is clearly having a positive impact on outcomes. Pupils' achievement continues to rise in reading and mathematics across all key stages. This is evident in pupils' books. However, there are some inconsistencies in practice. Progress is not as strong in writing across the school. There is also variation in teachers' expectations and pupils' presentation in some parts of key stage 2.

Pupils are very independent. In lesson observations and in pupils' books, inspectors noted pupils applying their learning in different contexts. They have the confidence to find out things for themselves. For example, at the start of each topic pupils are given time to consider what they want to learn. This has proven particularly successful in Year 6, where pupils have recorded a range of interesting questions about the experiences of evacuees in World War 2.

Since the last inspection, governors have appointed two progress leaders to provide further oversight of the impact of teaching across key stages 1 and 2. These leaders are highly skilled practitioners. They undertake a wide range of monitoring activities and know their respective areas well.

Safeguarding is effective.

Staff have created a culture of safeguarding at the school. Pupils unanimously reported that they feel safe and that there is someone to talk to if they have a concern or worry. Parents reported that staff are approachable and caring.

Attendance continues to improve at the school. The attendance of different groups of pupils is effectively analysed and tracked. Staff are aware of their duties and know families well.

Despite these strengths, leaders and governors acknowledge that there is scope for record-keeping to be more rigorous. The local authority has agreed to support the school in sharing best practice from other settings in relation to this aspect of

safeguarding.

Inspection findings

At the start of the inspection, inspectors met with you to share the school's self-evaluation and development plans. As a result of our discussions, we agreed several key lines of enquiry to focus inspection work. These areas included: the extent to which leaders monitor the impact that teaching has on learning; how well governors fulfil their statutory duties; the development of early English and mathematics skills in early years; and the level of challenge in writing.

- As outlined above, governors have appointed two progress leaders to support standards across the school. These leaders have wasted no time in conducting a range of monitoring activities to improve teaching. Findings from learning walks, book scrutinies and discussions with pupils are being used effectively to identify strengths and respond to any areas for development. However, while the overall standard of teaching is improving, teachers have limited opportunities to share what they know works well. As a result, there are some inconsistencies in teachers' planning, expectations and resulting outcomes in books.
- Governors have a clear understanding of the school's overall strengths and weaknesses. You provide them with key information and have supported them to interpret changes to the school's assessment system. Governors have established effective 'link' roles with different subject leaders and classes. This supports their understanding of the impact of the school's work and helps them to hold leaders to account. Though governance of the new Nursery and before-and-after-school club are at an early stage, greater urgency is required in establishing a clear strategic plan for the further development of the expanded early years provision.
- The development of English and mathematical skills and the outdoor environment featured as areas for improvement in the previous inspection report for the separate Nursery provision. Staff have secured improvements in these areas. Staff understand children's needs exceptionally well and form strong relationships with them. Early reading, writing and mathematics skills are developed through well-planned activities. Children's progress is captured in detail in portfolios and is used by staff to inform planning. Practice is effective across the Nursery and Reception classes. The indoor learning environment has developed at a faster rate than the outdoor learning environment. The outdoor environment has been enhanced by additional resources and a 'mud kitchen' but is not as engaging or well organised as other spaces in the early years.
- Standards in writing are developing across the school. The school has made considerable progress in improving pupils' grammar, punctuation and spelling skills. Following results in 2016 that were below national standards, leaders established a range of strategies to improve teaching and outcomes. Provisional results for 2017 indicate that every pupil reached the expected standard in the English grammar, punctuation and spelling test. This is well above national levels. However, achievement in writing remains lower than that found in reading and mathematics. We agreed during our learning walk and scrutiny of pupils' books that there is more to do in ensuring that pupils are routinely challenged in their

learning and supported to achieve at the highest possible level.

- Teachers have begun to work with one another and with other local schools in order to moderate the judgements they make about pupils' achievement. This work is bringing about a better shared understanding of attainment. However, moderation work is not fully established or routinely part of the school's monitoring cycle.
- The local authority has a clear understanding of the school's performance. Its support has been light touch due to sustained improvements in pupils' achievement. By the time pupils leave the school at the end of key stage 2, achievement is broadly in line with, or above, national levels.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- systems used to record and track any safeguarding concerns have greater rigour
- a clear strategic plan is devised for the further development of the expanded early years provision
- the outdoor learning environment in early years matches the quality of activities and resources found in the internal environment
- teachers have more opportunities to share effective practice and thereby establish consistently higher levels of expectation and challenge
- teachers participate in a wider programme of moderation activities so that they develop even greater confidence in the judgements they make about pupils' achievement.

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

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Keay
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors met with you to discuss the school's self-evaluation and development plans. Meetings were also held with the school's progress leaders and administration team.

Inspectors scrutinised a range of school documentation including training records, paediatric first aid certificates, risk assessments, the single central record, child protection records and information relating to fire safety.

Inspectors visited every classroom and scrutinised outcomes in pupils' books in a range of subjects. I undertook observations of teaching and learning jointly with you.

Inspectors met with staff and pupils throughout the day to ascertain the extent to which the school has created a culture of safeguarding.

I met with two members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. The lead inspector held a telephone conversation with Staffordshire's commissioning manager for school improvement.

Inspectors took account of the 37 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, the 26 free text responses from parents, the 13 responses to the pupil survey and the five responses to the staff survey.