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31 May 2018

Mrs Helen Smith
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Smith

Short inspection of Styal Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 25 April 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 December 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Well-judged actions and clear focus have been effective in raising achievement since the previous inspection. Together with staff and governors, you are firmly committed to making sure that pupils at Styal Primary School have every opportunity to achieve their best. You have the full support of staff and have developed a strong and caring team. Parents and carers are very complimentary about the school and appreciate the hard work and dedication of the staff. In their responses to the Ofsted questionnaire, Parent View, all parents said they would recommend the school to others, and a typical comment was: 'The school allows individual children to flourish.'

You aim to ensure that the needs of individual pupils are at the heart of this inclusive school. There is a higher than average proportion of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. The commitment of leaders to securing the best possible outcomes for all pupils, including those who have SEN and/or disabilities, is palpable. You quickly identify pupils' needs on entry to the school and put appropriate support in place to help all children with their learning. The success of these actions is evident in the progress pupils make.

In class, pupils are proud, happy and industrious. They take care to present their work carefully in most lessons and employ the new handwriting style that you have introduced more consistently in their work. At your insistence, standards in this aspect of teaching have risen since the last inspection when it was an area for

improvement. Pupils listen carefully to adults and show great respect to visitors and each other. They value the range of responsibilities they can undertake, including being school councillors and Phys Kids leaders, whereby they organise and oversee sports activities for younger pupils.

You have made excellent use of the extensive outdoor space which the school enjoys in its unique position within a National Trust property. The outdoor learning experiences help pupils gain a better understanding of the natural world and an appreciation of their heritage. Staff use the rich woodland environment to support learning across the curriculum and develop pupils' social skills and emotional resilience. It was a joy to witness pupils excitedly venture out into the woods, undeterred by the pouring rain, confirming your view that this work improves their confidence and well-being.

The school has successfully addressed most of the areas identified for improvement at the last inspection. The recent initiatives focused on improving mathematics skills are helping to promote greater consistency in teaching. Well-planned and meaningful opportunities to develop their reasoning and problem-solving skills are helping pupils to reach the standards expected of them in mathematics.

A further area for improvement was to enable children in the early years to have free access to learning in the outdoor area. The learning environment for pupils in Reception has been redesigned and children can now move freely and safely in the well-resourced space. Additional training for early years staff means that the learning is purposeful and pupils make good progress as a result.

You were asked to strengthen the role of middle leaders so that they are more involved in monitoring and evaluating teaching. In a small school like yours, staff take on multiple responsibilities and you and your governors have concentrated on improving leadership of English, mathematics and science. This work has been successful. These aspects of the curriculum are well planned and leaders rigorously monitor the quality of teaching and learning. Consequently, pupils' progress in all three areas has improved.

Notwithstanding these improvements, you have a clear understanding of what needs to be done to develop the leadership of all subjects across the full breadth of the curriculum.

Governors work very closely with you to provide highly effective leadership and to challenge and support you. They demonstrate that they have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Staff training is up to date and there are well-established systems in place to keep pupils safe. Records viewed during the inspection showed that where pupils are potentially vulnerable, swift action is taken to protect them from harm.

Pupils are confident that adults in the school will help them if they have a problem and will deal with it quickly. They are taught to keep themselves safe, including when using the internet, and are well prepared to deal with any incidents.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry was to determine whether the recent improvement in the progress pupils made in writing and mathematics has been sustained. In 2015 and 2016, the progress in writing and mathematics was below national averages. Progress recovered in 2017 and was similar to that of other schools nationally by the end of key stage 2. You introduced robust procedures to monitor and track pupils' progress and the quality of teaching in reading, writing and mathematics. This enables you to identify quickly any individual who falls behind and provide extra support to help them catch up. You provided high-quality training to help all staff deliver mathematics lessons that focus more effectively on developing pupils' reasoning skills. Staff now have a good understanding of how to ask questions that deepen pupils' understanding of mathematical concepts.
- You introduced a more consistent approach to the teaching of writing. This has resulted in a clear progression of skills as pupils move through the school, with editing becoming more commonplace. The most able pupils apply higher-level writing features with increasing confidence. You have raised the expectations of the standards pupils should achieve and they are able to apply their writing skills across a range of subjects. The school's most up-to-date assessments show that these changes continue to have a positive impact on the good progress pupils make in writing and mathematics.
- The improving trend in the progress pupils made in reading in 2017 has been maintained for those currently in school. Pupils are encouraged to read frequently and they enjoy reading for pleasure.
- My next line of enquiry was to consider whether the curriculum provided opportunities for pupils to make progress in a wide range of subjects. There are strengths in the curriculum, including in the teaching of science, history and physical education. The wide range of extra-curricular activities on offer, including the 'daily mile' run in which all pupils participate, further enriches the curriculum. The outdoor learning experiences have a positive impact on many areas of the curriculum, including design technology, personal, social and health education, and art.
- Some subjects, however, including modern foreign languages, geography and music, are not taught consistently or in sufficient depth to enable pupils to make the progress they need to prepare them for the next stage of their education. Discussions with you and subject leaders, as well as evidence in pupils' books, show that pupils have limited opportunities to explore subject-specific skills in these areas.
- My next line of enquiry related to actions being taken by leaders to reduce persistent absence. Over time, this has been higher than the national average. Your strategy for improving attendance has been effective. You engage well with

parents, providing support for those who need it to help overcome obstacles to good attendance. You have good systems in place, such as celebration certificates and prizes drawn from a lottery in assembly, to reward pupils for high attendance. The introduction of the breakfast club has also made a positive contribution, especially for pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium funding.

- Close monitoring of attendance and punctuality enables the school to target families where pupils are persistently absent. When required, and with support from the local authority, you have issued fixed-penalty notices. These actions have resulted in significant improvements in attendance rates. Compared to the same period last year, current data shows that there has been a 6% decline in the rate of persistent absence.
- Finally, we discussed the information provided on the school's website. The website does not fully comply with statutory requirements. Minor amendments were made during the inspection to improve some of the information, including updating the school's SEN report. Further work is needed to ensure that the school's reports on the use of the pupil premium funding and the physical education and sport premium reflect the impact of the good work that you do. In addition, the school must publish its equality objectives on the school website.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- subject leadership is further developed so that all areas of the curriculum are well planned and carefully monitored to help pupils acquire knowledge and skills in all aspects of their education
- they systematically check that the school website is up to date and complies with statutory obligations.

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

Yours sincerely

Catherine Parkinson
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you, your deputy headteacher and some of your subject leaders. I spoke with the local authority school improvement partner. I met with members of the governing body, including the chair and vice chair. I visited all classes and you observed teaching and learning with me. Together with some of your teachers, I looked at pupils' work and listened to children read. I met with a group of pupils from the school council. I took account of the 59 responses to

Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. I evaluated the free-text responses. I considered the 16 responses from staff to the Ofsted online questionnaire and the 25 responses to the pupils' questionnaire. I looked at a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and the school development plan. I viewed a range of information about pupils' attainment and progress. I scrutinised the school's single central record and I undertook a review of the school's website.