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Mrs Marcia Harris  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Harris

### **Short inspection of Cradley CofE Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 25 April 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 your school was judged to be good in September 2012.

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

You and your leadership team have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Your strong leadership has continued a culture of high expectations for pupil achievement and, as a result, pupils are securing good outcomes across the school. You have worked extremely closely with staff, parents and pupils to sustain a sense of team work and an ethos in which pupils can thrive.

You and your leaders, including governors, have an effective understanding of the strengths in the school and are quick to tackle areas for development. You rightly put your school vision, 'Every child, every chance, every day', at the heart of your improvement work. This ambitious approach is helping to secure continued improvements in teaching across the school. Your individualised approach to professional development is supporting staff, including newly qualified teachers, to refine and improve the quality of their teaching.

Pupils enjoy learning at your school because teachers plan interesting activities that stimulate their curiosity and challenge them to make good progress. This is clearly apparent in mathematics, where children develop age-appropriate mathematical skills through practical activities and regular opportunities for reasoning. This approach is also helping pupils to secure high-quality mathematical vocabulary. Pupils also make good progress in writing across the school, particularly in developing accurate letter formation in the early years and by developing rich language as they move through the school. Language in written work is particularly

sophisticated by the end of key stage 2. Occasionally, some activities in English and mathematics could be even more challenging to further accelerate pupils' progress.

Pupils' behaviour is a strength of the school. Pupils are considerate towards one another in the classroom and at other times in the school day. Staff teach and model values in a highly effective way, which is helping pupils to develop mature and positive attitudes. For example, a younger child in the school commented, 'My favourite value is belonging. If a new child joins the school, we must make sure they feel welcome and like they belong.' You plan important wider cultural experiences for children, for example, you have a meaningful link with a school in Tanzania and you also took children to visit a mosque when learning about other faiths. Through your school values and these wider experiences, you provide extremely well for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

As a result of actions you have taken since the previous inspection, the achievement of children in the early years and foundation stage has improved. This is particularly evident in mathematics, where the number of children achieving the expected standard is increasing each year and is now above the national average. Children learn mathematics through imaginative scenarios. For example, during the inspection, children were using money to buy items from the farm shop in a role-play activity.

You have also responded to the previous lower attendance for pupils eligible for free school meals. You react quickly to any dips in pupils' attendance and you are proactive in supporting parents, so that their child attends school more regularly. These strategies have led to the attendance of pupils who are eligible for free school meals increasing each year, culminating in their attendance being above the national average in the academic year 2015/16.

Since the previous inspection you have also worked successfully to improve provision for the most able pupils. The leadership team have trained staff to improve their questioning skills, which is encouraging the most able pupils to think deeply and more independently about their work. In the 2016 national assessments at the end of key stages 1 and 2, the proportions of pupils that achieved the highest standards in mathematics and writing were above the national average. However, the proportion of pupils achieving the highest standard in reading was just below the national average. You recognise that this can be improved by ensuring that the most able pupils develop more complex reading skills. You have made some positive early steps in this area. You acknowledge that these reading approaches need embedding in order to achieve sustained higher standards for this group of pupils.

The governing body are very effective and they are ambitious in their drive for improvement. They know the school very well and play a vital role in the strategic direction of the school. They are in school regularly and they provide you and your staff with an appropriate balance of challenge and support. Governors are diligent in checking the rigour of safeguarding procedures in the school.

You have worked hard to develop other leaders in the school who are trusted to make decisions and lead on their areas of responsibilities. You and your deputy headteacher work extremely effectively together by checking the quality of teaching, pupils' books and pupils' assessment information on a regular basis. You use learning from this to write improvement plans. The links between your self-evaluation and your improvement plans are not always as coherent as they need to be. You recognise that improving this will enable you to focus even more precisely on the most important priorities in the school.

Parents are overwhelmingly positive about you and your staff's dedicated approach to knowing the pupils as individuals. Comments included: 'The headteacher knows the children very well and is incredibly passionate about Cradley.' All parents who responded to Parent View believe that their child makes good progress and almost all believe that their child is happy, safe and well looked after. A very large majority believe that the school makes sure that pupils are well behaved, it is well led and managed and that they receive valuable information about the progress their children make.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The safeguarding culture is a strength of the school. As the designated lead for safeguarding, you are thorough and tenacious in keeping children safe and ensuring that staff understand and carry out their responsibilities. The safeguarding governor supports your work thoroughly and holds you to account. The safeguarding policy has been reviewed continuously and meets statutory guidelines. Record keeping is organised and any disclosures or referrals are both well managed and followed up. All staff receive regular updates and training about safeguarding, which leads to a very responsive and knowledgeable culture. Your procedures for recruiting, vetting and checking staff are very thorough. The site is secure and procedures for checking visitors in and out of school are extremely robust.

The pupils at your school know how to keep themselves safe. They are taught about safety in the curriculum and through wider opportunities. The online safety workshops for pupils and parents have ensured that pupils understand the dangers associated with social media and they know how to be safe online. Pupils also understand what bullying is and they feel that unkind behaviour is quickly addressed by staff, in the rare moments that it occurs.

### **Inspection findings**

- During the academic year 2015/16, the proportion of children in the early years that achieved a good level of development was in line with the national average. This group of children entered reception with skills and knowledge just below the expected level for their age, so they made good progress from their starting points. Standards are rising over time in reception due to good teaching and effective leadership. This good progress was evident in children's writing books, where several children had progressed from basic mark making at the start of this academic year and are now forming letters accurately and writing

independent sentences. The most able children are being tracked carefully and challenged in their learning, to help them exceed the typical level for their age by the end of the year.

- You and your staff have focused on raising the profile of reading across the school and, as a result, pupils display a love of reading and a genuine interest in books. You have also ensured that parents are encouraged to read with their children at home, which was clearly evident in the home reading records. Teachers are skilfully teaching reading comprehension skills to pupils and this is having a positive impact on their progress. In 2016, at the end of Year 2 and at the end of Year 6, the proportion of children achieving the expected standard was well above the national average. However, the proportion of the most able pupils that reach the highest levels was just below the national average. You have recognised that the teaching of reading for this group of pupils needs to be more challenging.
- The teaching I observed with you and pupils' work in books show that pupils make good progress over time in English and mathematics. Pupils' mathematical reasoning skills are developing very effectively because they are applying their skills to reason and problem-solve on a regular basis. Their mathematical activities are often practical and involve the sharing of good mathematical dialogue. For example, in a key stage 2 class, children were working in pairs sorting different two-dimensional shapes into a Carroll diagram. They used accurate mathematical language about the properties of the shapes in order to reason and justify where they should go.
- Pupils are acquiring a rich vocabulary because teachers are challenging them to learn new words or improve their word choices. This is having a positive impact on the quality of writing in the school. In a key stage 2 class, a teacher asked for examples of language for character descriptions and pupils shared words like 'infuriating' and 'melancholy', which were used appropriately in their sentences.
- There are a few occasions in English and mathematics lessons where some activities are not as challenging as they should be. While pupils are securing good progress across the school, a greater consistency in the level of challenge provided would stretch pupils to accelerate their progress even further.
- The provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is good. The special educational needs coordinator works closely with staff to address pupils' needs in the classroom and through more specialist interventions, as required. As a result, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress across the school. The proportion of pupils on the special educational needs register is above the national average and during the inspection you agreed that a review of the pupils on the register was required. This is because there are small number of pupils whose needs are not complex enough to be on the register.
- Attendance declined for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities in the academic year 2015/16. It was low and in the bottom 10% of all schools nationally. You have responded well to this decline, which has led to a significant rise in attendance for this group since September.

- You and your leaders were able to share evidence of your school improvement planning and your self-evaluation of the school. It demonstrated that you and your leaders know the school very well and are continually driving improvements in the school. In some places, the link between your self-evaluation and your improvement plans are not always as coherent as they could be. You have also identified that some improvement plans could be simplified, so that they focus more precisely on the most important priorities in the school.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the teaching of reading enables a higher proportion of the most able pupils to secure the highest standards across the school
- activities in English and maths provide a consistently high level of challenge, so that more pupils can make accelerated progress throughout the school
- school improvement planning and self-evaluation link coherently together, in order to address the most important priorities in the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Matt Meekin  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, the deputy headteacher and the special educational needs coordinator. I also met with the chair of governors and four other governors. I spoke to pupils informally and formally, including hearing pupils read. I made short visits to every classroom with a leader and looked at pupils' books. I spoke to parents at the start of the day and considered 51 responses and 47 free-text responses to Parent View.

I scrutinised various documents including the school's self-evaluation, improvement plan, information about teachers' performance management and the documents that you use to check the quality of teaching. You shared with me the most recent assessments of pupils' attainment and progress and we discussed the national test results and assessments undertaken by pupils in 2016. I also looked at the school's published information on the website, as well as minutes of governing body meetings and information about attendance, behaviour and safety.