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Mr Stephen Matthews
Headteacher
St Laurence CofE Primary School
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Dear Mr Matthews

Short inspection of St Laurence CofE Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 12 June 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 September 2014.

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 your senior leaders are ambitious for the school. You demonstrate a drive and determination to continually improve towards outstanding. You and your team regularly reflect on teaching and learning and outcomes for pupils to see what you can do better. Your self-evaluation of the school is critical and forward thinking.

You provide a curriculum that enriches the lives of pupils and which is underpinned by the school's strong values, a Christian ethos and high standards. The learning environment and displays reflect the high-quality outcomes that pupils achieve, especially in subjects such as art. Pupils have many opportunities to take part in sporting, musical and dramatic events. Before school they play cricket and after school they can participate in a range of activities such as rounders, cookery, orchestra, athletics and Minecraft. Quite rightly, pupils are proud of their sporting achievements.

Governors are recently established as a new governing body. They demonstrate a range of expertise and are using their skills well to benefit the school and to develop themselves as an effective governing body.

Most parents and carers spoken to during the inspection and those who completed Ofsted's online survey were positive about the school. They particularly appreciate the good start their children receive in the early years. They appreciate the good

communication you have with them and say that this has improved through the use of a school app and social media.

Pupils are well behaved, polite and courteous. A calm, purposeful atmosphere permeates the school. Relationships are strong and pupils respond well to adults. In lessons, they settle to work quickly and remain focused. At lunchtime, younger pupils play well alongside older pupils who provide games and activities for them.

The local authority has limited input to the school other than an annual review because the school is deemed to be good. It has, however, used the expertise of staff in supporting other schools through coaching, mentoring and moderating pupils' work. The headteacher is currently executive headteacher of another school, which has enabled staff to further develop their leadership skills. Collaboration between the two schools has had a positive impact on aspects of school improvement such as the teaching of reading.

Since the last inspection leaders have successfully addressed the areas for improvement. Pupils can explain their learning better and know how to improve their learning. Year 6 pupils set their own targets, such as using better openers at the start of a sentence. Pupils now have more freedom to access resources independently.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that there is a culture of safeguarding and arrangements are fit for purpose. Leaders ensure that pupils are kept as safe as possible. Staff know what to do if they have concerns about a child and who to report them to. Staff log concerns diligently and refer them to the appropriate person. Pupils and families are well supported to ensure that they receive the help they need. Although records are kept chronologically and staff know pupils well, repeated concerns relating to a pupil are not collated to give as clear an overview as there could be of safeguarding an individual child. Not all staff receive safeguarding training as quickly as they should when they join the school.

Pupils say they feel safe and parents agree. Pupils are confident to tell an adult if they are worried about something. Pupils say that if there is any bullying, teachers deal with it well.

Inspection findings

- Pupils enjoy coming to school and attendance is above the national figure. The school has worked effectively with the education welfare officer to improve attendance for some specific groups of pupils. Consequently, the persistent absence of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, in particular, has reduced significantly. The attendance of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is now good. Pupils receive academic support as well as pastoral support from the learning mentor to ensure that they continue to make progress. Class teachers are vigilant in identifying pupils who have missed school

for any length of time and provide appropriate interventions to help them to catch up. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils has also risen above that of other pupils in the school.

- The progress and attainment of boys in reading at the end of key stage 2 in 2017 and 2016 were not as strong as for girls. Leaders can explain the reason for this but are not complacent and have reviewed their approach to reading. They recognised a need to inspire boys, in particular, and increase their motivation for reading. They introduced a new reading programme to which pupils have responded positively. A group of pupils spoke enthusiastically about reading and the positive impact of the changes that have been made. They particularly enjoy the new whole-class approach to reading and say it has helped them to develop their vocabulary more. They say they now have more opportunities to discuss reading and text than they did before. A 'book club' for boys has inspired boys to read more often. Disadvantaged pupils receive regular support with their reading and adults listen to them read frequently. Their progress is tracked carefully and teachers are held to account. Any barriers to learning are identified and addressed quickly so that pupils receive appropriate pastoral and academic support to maintain their progress.
- Attainment in writing is strong and has been consistently strong over time. Leaders are aware of the reasons for the recent dip in pupils' progress in writing in 2017. Pupils' workbooks and the school's assessment information show that current pupils in almost all year groups are making good progress in writing. Pupils write well and at length. In key stage 1, pupils are developing their skills well. However, the quality of handwriting is inconsistent and errors such as capital letters in the middle of words are not routinely addressed.
- In the early years, leaders place a strong emphasis on the teaching of literacy skills and, as a result, children make good progress. Adults help children to develop their reading and writing skills well. Children are encouraged to use full stops, capital letters and finger spaces and are beginning to do this effectively. They write using phonetically plausible words and demonstrate a keenness to write, for example, when writing soup recipes and describing their design for a 'potato head'. Adults develop children's ability to sequence a story effectively through the use of language and role play. On occasion, however, adults do not take advantage of opportunities to deepen children's skills in writing when they work independently.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the induction process for new staff ensures that they receive safeguarding training promptly
- safeguarding records of concern are collated so that leaders can see more quickly where there are repeated concerns for individual pupils
- teachers adopt a consistent approach to the teaching of handwriting to improve the quality of presentation for some pupils

- in early years, teachers further challenge children in independent activities to apply and deepen their skills in writing.

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

Yours sincerely

Sue Cameron
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you and your senior leadership team. I met with four members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority. I spoke to parents at the beginning of the school day and considered the 25 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, including 13 written comments. I also considered the 15 responses to the pupil questionnaire. There were no responses to the staff survey. I spoke to pupils formally and informally during the day. I scrutinised a range of school documentation, including the single central record, safeguarding records, your school self-evaluation document and school improvement plan, minutes of governing body meetings, and assessment information. Together, we visited most classes and I looked at pupils' work. I observed pupils' behaviour throughout the day, before school, in lessons and at lunchtime.