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Miss Victoria Lock
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Dear Miss Victoria Lock

Short inspection of Devoran School

Following my visit to the school on 12 December 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 March 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. You, your leadership team and the governors know the school thoroughly and are clear about its strengths and what needs to improve. For example, you know that the most able pupils need a higher level of challenge in their work, particularly in mathematics, and that assessment systems need further development. You and your leadership team are committed to continuous improvement through staff development.

Since your appointment in September 2017, you have swiftly gained a good overview of the school and your pupils' capabilities. You have also quickly developed positive relationships with parents, who, overwhelmingly, would recommend this popular school to other parents. You have high expectations for pupils and staff and act as an effective role model, which enables you to gain their respect. The high quality of work on display signifies your high expectations and celebrates pupils' considerable achievements in and out of the school. You work collaboratively and effectively with external agencies, other leaders and teachers and are fully supported by a determined and very skilled governing body. You have also established effective links with the local community. You have undertaken a thorough evaluation of the school's work and this has helped you to plan actions to address the school's main priorities.

The proportion of children in early years achieving a good level of development has been above the national figure for the previous three years. Good teaching of phonics

ensures that high numbers are successful in the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1. Effective teaching in key stage 1 means that pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of the key stage is at least in line with, and often well above, that of pupils nationally. There was a dip in the numbers of pupils achieving the expected standards in writing and mathematics in the 2017 end-of-Year-6 national tests. This was despite the additional support teachers gave to those pupils who were falling behind.

Pupils are happy and enthusiastic learners. Adults have high aspirations for pupils and develop strong working relationships with them. This gives pupils the confidence to improve their learning and, as a result, they thoroughly enjoy discussing their work, persevere when learning gets tricky and are keen to succeed. Pupils behave well in and around the school, showing a very high level of respect for adults and each other. They enjoy the engaging play equipment and being with adults who play with them at lunchtimes. A typical comment made by a pupil was that 'the best thing about our school is the teachers'. The many pupils whom I spoke to during the inspection say that behaviour is good in and around the school and there is no bullying.

The school has successfully tackled the areas for improvement raised in the previous inspection. Pupils respond positively to the many opportunities provided for them to review their own learning, share ideas and make decisions about how to improve. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 settle well into their activities at the beginning of the day and are ready to start lessons quickly.

Safeguarding is effective.

The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure was a strength at the previous inspection. You have further strengthened safeguarding arrangements, ensuring a safe environment in which pupils can work and play.

A culture of safeguarding, safety and welfare is at the forefront of the school's work, showing that you and your staff take your responsibilities for safeguarding very seriously. Leaders ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of a high quality. All staff are well briefed on current policies in order to keep up to date with requirements. This includes understanding the 'Prevent' duty to protect pupils from the risk of radicalisation and extremism. You have ensured that policy, practice and procedure meet all statutory requirements, including the safer recruitment of staff and volunteers. Leaders, along with the governing body, make sure that these arrangements are robust and kept fully up to date.

Pupils feel safe and understand what constitutes bullying. They know how to stay safe, for example when walking home from school and when using the internet. Pupils say that they are reassured that there is someone to turn to if they are upset or 'down'. Parents strongly agree that their children enjoy school and are well cared for. Staff consistently set high expectations of behaviour and pupils' good understanding of the school's rules enables them to focus on their learning very effectively.

Inspection findings

- We agreed that my first line of enquiry would be to investigate how effective leaders are in ensuring that the good outcomes in key stage 1 are maintained throughout key stage 2. Outcomes for pupils who completed the Year 6 tests in 2017 dipped and were lower than for pupils completing key stage 2 in previous years. You identified correctly that this was largely due to circumstances that were unique to this group of pupils. Nevertheless, you have made changes, such as introducing a new assessment system to ensure that standards rise in Year 6 and across the school.
- You use your new assessment system effectively to support teachers in identifying weaknesses in individual pupils' learning. You measure the pupils' progress very regularly to ensure that no pupils are falling behind as they move through the school. During our joint observations of learning, pupils were excited to check and improve their work. An example of this was in a Year 4 class where pupils used a story map to retell a well-known traditional tale. They improved the quality of dialogue in the sentences by acting out the parts and writing down the sentences as they said them to each other. They were reminded by the teacher to add punctuation that supported the expression in their speech.
- The next line of enquiry focused on the school's actions to ensure that core curriculum subjects are taught effectively across all key stages. There have been significant changes in staffing over the past year and this has made consistency and continuity in teaching a challenge. Staff say that changes have been managed well, that there are clear leadership roles and that they support each other very well. Governors have taken effective action to secure as much stability in staffing as possible.
- Governors have supported you and your deputy headteacher well in sustaining good teaching and pupils' positive attitude to learning. Pupils continue to make good progress. However, the most able children leaving early years do not always achieve the higher standards in key stage 1. Those pupils who do excel in Year 2 do not make rapid enough progress in order to achieve highly at the end of key stage 2. Pupils say that work is sometimes too easy, especially in mathematics, when a teacher repeats a lesson that many of their peers have not understood clearly enough.
- Your skilled guidance of new and temporary staff, such as supply teachers, and existing staff has resulted in a strong team who willingly share their skills to quicken pupils' progress. Parents, staff and governors praise the effectiveness of new leaders and recognise the continuing improvement in pupils' academic and personal development. Work in books shows that there is a comprehensive range of skills taught in literacy and numeracy in both key stages 1 and 2. Current pupils are making strong progress across all year groups in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils use these core skills very effectively in other subjects such as science and history.
- My final line of enquiry involved reviewing leaders' actions in ensuring that their own evaluations of pupils' progress and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment are bringing about an improvement in standards. You use your new

assessment system well to measure the progress individual pupils make as well as groups of pupils and year groups. However, teachers do not yet measure the progress of groups of pupils depending on their level of prior achievement as they leave each key stage. This means that they do not support some most-able pupils effectively enough to make the progress of which they are capable. Governors, in turn, do not have sufficient information about the progress of all key groups of pupils in order to challenge school leaders effectively.

- The leadership structure has undergone significant change over the last year. While you have a very comprehensive and ambitious plan for school improvement, the impact of these plans is not yet fully realised. Teachers are not yet fully skilled in using the new assessment system and lack of precision in their evaluation of pupils' progress is hindering pupils, particularly the most able, from making the progress of which they are capable. This delays plans to accelerate progress across the school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- improvements in teaching and learning are fully established in order to further raise the achievement of the most able pupils, particularly in mathematics
- teachers' use of the new assessment system is more consistent across all key stages and all year groups, especially regarding those pupils exceeding national expectations in the early years and key stage 1.

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

Yours sincerely

Julie Jane
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I spoke with you and leaders responsible for literacy, numeracy and special educational needs and/or disabilities. I spoke to groups and individual pupils around the school as well as representatives of the governing body and a representative of the local authority. I listened to pupils from Year 2 and Year 6 read.

We made visits to lessons to observe pupils' attitudes to learning and took a learning walk around the school. We also scrutinised work in pupils' books across a range of ages and abilities and reviewed the information held in the school's new assessment system.

I scrutinised a range of documentary evidence, which included the school's self-evaluation, the school improvement plan, current progress information and pupil attendance information. I also evaluated safeguarding referrals, staff appointment documents, governors' minutes, child protection records and the single central record.

In addition, I talked to parents in school and took account of the 79 responses to the Parent View online survey.