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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
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Janet Mason
Headteacher
Dinton CofE (VC) Primary School
Hindon Road
Dinton
Wiltshire
SP3 5HW

Dear Mrs Mason

Short inspection of Dinton CofE (VC) Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 23 January 2019, 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 July 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have taken effective action on the previous inspection recommendations, which concerned marking and writing. Teachers apply the school marking policy and pupils say that they find it very useful in helping them to improve their work. You have also improved writing. Teachers pay close attention to spelling and punctuation in writing across the curriculum, and pupils' written work is generally neat. Key stage 2 writing progress was in the top 20% nationally in 2017 and remained strong in 2018.

Your clear vision for improvement is underpinned by effective use of data and shared by staff. You and your leaders of literacy and mathematics work closely together to ensure that the school continues to move forward. They have developed innovative strategies to improve spelling across the school and number work in key stage 2. You are monitoring these closely and can show that they are starting to have a positive impact.

Governance is effective. The governors to whom I spoke know the school well and understand what it is trying to improve. They pay due attention to long-term planning and likely changes in the size of the school's roll. They provide challenge and fulfil key statutory requirements, though information about the governing body needs updating on the school website. Governors appreciate and support the school's ethos, which is based on learning and British and Christian values.

The school makes sure that work is planned effectively for the mixed-age classes. You teach pupils the full curriculum for their age through a two-year programme. It

is designed to interest them and make links between the things they are learning. Pupils talked of the fun they had and what they had learned in weeks with a particular focus such as 'art week' and 'fair trade week'. They were keen to point out that they did not stop learning other subjects during these weeks – but that they learned more. Year 6 pupils told me how they had improved their play in new sports such as hockey.

The Year 6 pupils spoke very maturely to me about how it feels to be a pupil and their views of the distinctiveness of the school. They take a range of responsibilities and feel the school listens to them. Pupils across the different year groups say that they are happy and value the relationships they have with others of all ages. One pointed out how being happy helps them to be ready to learn, saying: 'You can make a lot of friends. Making friends means they can teach you more.'

Almost all staff and parents who responded to the inspection questionnaires were very positive. Some parents wrote extremely positive comments such as, 'We have no concerns and only praise for the way the school is run,' or, 'Even if I won the lottery I would carry on sending my son to this school.' You know from your own summer questionnaires that a very few parents have concerns about communication and you are taking steps to address this. Most parents and staff feel discipline is effective. You recognise that one or two pupils need support with behaviour, and you are drawing on external expertise to secure this.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. The school carries out the required checks on adults who work or volunteer in the school. Training is carried out regularly, including on the 'Prevent' duty. Staff I spoke to knew exactly what to do if they had worries about a pupil, and you have clear forms to record concerns. You listen to and act on any concerns, doing the right things to safeguard children, drawing on advice from social services. You review premises safety and have taken steps to improve this where needed.

All the pupils I spoke to said that they felt safe in school, a view very strongly supported by your own pupil questionnaires last summer. They told me who they could go to if they had a problem, and several praised the work of the emotional literacy support assistant. They said there was very little bullying and that it was dealt with if it occurred. Lunchtime is effectively supervised. Staff join in and encourage good play.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection I focused on three lines of enquiry: progress in mathematics in key stage 2; how well pupils of middle ability in Years 1 to 4 build on previous learning; and how well children's needs are met in the mixed early years and Year 1 class, particularly in writing.
- Standards can vary from year to year because this is a small school, but taking the last three years together, the standards reached by pupils in Year 6 have

been much lower in mathematics than in reading. Reading is a particular strength, with the 2018 Year 6 pupils making progress that was in the top 20% of schools nationally. However, progress in mathematics has lagged behind progress in writing as well as in reading. You recognised this and you have taken effective steps to improve mathematics in key stage 2.

- You analysed pupils' areas of weakness in mathematics and have introduced guided number sessions in which pupils work in ability groups to strengthen their arithmetic. They find these sessions very useful and their skills are improving. Their work shows that this focus is complemented by challenging problem-solving and mathematical investigation. Teachers are very effective in encouraging pupils to understand mathematics as well as complete sums correctly. You agree that work in mathematics in key stage 1 has not yet been developed to the same standard.
- In 2017, some Year 2 pupils did not reach expected standards despite meeting expected goals when they left Reception. The specific pupils were identified at the time and have been monitored closely through Years 3 and 4. Most of these pupils have caught up effectively, in both mathematics and English. Where there is more to do, the school has identified pupils' specific needs and is working on them. The 2018 results show that Year 2 pupils made good progress from expected standards at the end of Reception.
- Standards at the end of Reception vary because numbers are small and children enter the school with different abilities. However, there is variation between what the same pupils achieve in different areas. For example, in 2018 all the children did well and reached expected standards in communication and language, in physical development and in personal, social and emotional development. However, only about two thirds reached the expected standard in writing. In 2017 all the children reached the expected standard in reading but only half reached it in writing.
- In the work we looked at from the Year R/1 class, some pupils were making strong progress in writing. These tended to be the most able children. A few were making slower progress. The school recognises that this is an area for further work.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the good knowledge and understanding of mathematics being developed in key stage 2 are extended into key stage 1
- children's progress in writing improves in the early years to mirror that made in reading and other areas of the curriculum.

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

Yours sincerely

Deborah Zachary
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and, separately, your literacy and mathematics leaders, to discuss the work of the school, the progress pupils make and the steps you take to safeguard pupils.

You and I visited all classrooms together. We also studied pupils' key stage 1 and 2 mathematics work, some Year 4 writing work, and examples of writing individual pupils had done at different stages of Reception and Year 1. I met with a group of Year 6 pupils, and I talked to a range of other pupils in the playground. I took account of six responses to the pupils' Ofsted questionnaire and the 92 pupils' responses to the school's own 2018 questionnaire.

I held meetings with three governors and had a telephone conversation with the school's local authority challenge and support partner. I talked to staff informally and took account of nine responses to the staff questionnaire.

I looked at 16 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, together with 10 written comments. I also took account of the results of the school's own questionnaires for gathering parents' views.