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Mrs Rebecca Butler  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Butler

### **Short inspection of Dothill Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 23 October 2018 with Heather Phillips HMI, 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 October 2013.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Since the last inspection there has been a period of turbulence in both leadership and staffing. However, since your appointment in 2016 you have improved teaching, raised expectations and established a strong leadership team. As a result, standards have improved. You have developed senior leaders so that they contribute effectively to improving the quality of teaching and learning, and outcomes for pupils. You have recently appointed new middle leaders so that the leadership of the school continues to grow. You, your leadership team and governors have a clear understanding of the strengths of the school and the areas for development. You continually reflect on your practice and take swift and effective action to ensure that you achieve the best possible outcomes for pupils.

Governors have high expectations and are fully involved in the strategic direction of the school. They use their skills and expertise to good effect and, as a result, have had a positive impact on areas of school improvement. Governors regularly analyse data about pupil outcomes and visit school regularly to check the impact of leaders' work. They offer leaders appropriate support, but also challenge them by asking appropriately evaluative questions about aspects of school improvement. Governors work closely with the designated leaders for safeguarding and fulfil their statutory responsibilities. They keep themselves well informed and up to date with training, and check safeguarding procedures and the school site so that pupils are kept as

safe as possible. Governors monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of additional funding, such as the pupil premium and the physical education (PE) and sport premium. They are reflective and forward-thinking, and have organised a review of the pupil premium strategy to ensure that it has a strong impact on outcomes for disadvantaged pupils.

Most parents and carers who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and those who spoke to inspectors during the inspection shared positive views about the school. They agree that their children are safe, happy, well looked after and make good progress. Many parents commented on the positive relationships in school and say it is a friendly and supportive school. Parents agree that staff are approachable and sort out any issues. They receive good communication and say they are well informed. A small number of parents expressed some concerns about recent staff changes. However, other parents commented that leaders manage this well, in the circumstances.

Pupils are proud to attend the school and speak highly of their teachers. In lessons, they are focused and engaged and demonstrate positive attitudes to their learning. For example, in a Year 5 mathematics lesson, although the work was challenging pupils persevered and demonstrated great resilience. They work together well and willingly share their knowledge and understanding. At lunchtimes, pupils participate in a range of activities. Older pupils support younger pupils in art club, for example, and help them to look after the school's guinea pigs.

You have worked effectively with the local authority and the teaching school alliance to drive school improvement. As a result, you have implemented effective systems to improve teaching and learning and strengthen leadership.

You have continued to address the areas for development identified at the last inspection. Teachers now use questioning more effectively to check pupils' understanding and you ensure that pupils receive specific support when they need it. Pupils have more opportunities to think for themselves and apply their learning, but this is still work in progress. Pupils now have access to a wider range of information and communication technology to support them in their learning. You are continuing to develop school leaders. As a result, subject and phase leaders are beginning to have a positive impact on their areas of responsibility.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The culture of safeguarding is strong. You ensure that all staff and governors are well trained and are clear about policies and procedures. You check their understanding regularly. Safeguarding is a high priority and a regular agenda item in staff meetings. The record-keeping for the recruitment of staff is thorough and clear. Concerns about pupils are carefully logged and appropriately detailed. You follow up concerns in a timely manner and will escalate them further if necessary. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose.

Pupils know how to keep themselves safe and are confident to tell an adult if they have a worry. Pupils know that if they have a problem it will be sorted out. A group of pupils, the 'safeguarding squad', are trained to support other pupils with their safety and welfare. Through your curriculum and assemblies, you teach pupils about e-safety, drugs education, self-awareness and 'how to say no'.

### **Inspection findings**

- Over time, progress and attainment in mathematics at the end of key stage 2 have been below the national average. You are clear that pupils' conceptual understanding in mathematics needs to be much stronger. Consequently, you have adopted a purposeful, well-structured approach to the teaching of mathematics. Pupils deepen their understanding and apply their learning in a range of contexts. Teachers plan themed weeks, such as 'the gingerbread man', so that pupils can apply their mathematics skills in some exciting and real-life contexts. Pupils use resources well to support their learning. They demonstrate a pride in their work, and books are neatly presented. Teachers spot and address misconceptions promptly so that pupils can receive additional help.
- Inspectors observed some highly effective teaching that has resulted in pupils' outcomes in mathematics improving. The quality of mathematics interventions with small groups, however, is not as strong as the main teaching sessions in the classroom because these do not deepen pupils' conceptual understanding. Pupils are improving their ability to develop rapid recall of number facts and efficient methods of calculation and to recognise relationships between numbers. However, this needs to improve further if they are to achieve greater fluency in mathematics.
- In the recent past, the number of fixed-term exclusions was high. This is now much improved, and in the last academic year there were none. After joining the school you established five key values with pupils, parents and governors, that the school ethos now embodies: 'To be kind, to be honest, to be respectful, to be responsible and to be your best'. Inspectors observed positive behaviour in school throughout the day. In assembly, for example, pupils are calm, respectful and attentive throughout. Pupils are encouraged to reflect on their behaviour and you discuss regularly with pupils how they can demonstrate the school values.
- Pupils' needs are now better met and there is a clear behaviour policy in place. You have trained staff and work closely with external agencies to provide additional support for pupils who need it. Staff manage pupils' behaviour effectively and, as a result, the number of recorded behaviour incidents has dramatically reduced. You analyse behaviour records for individual pupils who have been involved in several repeated incidents. However, you do not analyse them for all pupils to help to identify any possible patterns and trends.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers enable pupils to further develop fluency in mathematics
- the quality of small-group interventions in mathematics is as effective as the practice in whole-class sessions in deepening pupils' conceptual understanding
- data about behaviour incidents is further analysed to identify patterns and trends to enable appropriate actions to be taken.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Telford & Wrekin. 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 met with you, the chair of governors and other members of the governing body, and a representative of the local authority. Inspectors spoke to parents at the beginning of the school day and considered the 101 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including the 51 written comments. We also considered the 23 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and the one response to Ofsted's pupil survey. Inspectors scrutinised a range of school documentation, including the single central record, the school self-evaluation and school improvement plans, the minutes of governing body meetings, safeguarding information and records of behaviour. Inspectors visited classrooms with you and the assistant headteacher and looked at pupils' work in mathematics. We observed pupils' behaviour at the beginning of the school day, on the playground, during lessons and in assembly. Inspectors spoke to pupils informally throughout the day.