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Miss Amanda Salisbury
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Dear Miss Salisbury

Short inspection of Lickey Hills Primary School and Nursery

Following my visit to the school on 11 December 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 November 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 have successfully developed a united team of staff, pupils and governors who exemplify your current school values. Your commitment to ongoing improvement is evident in your scrupulous analysis of current information held in school. You provide justifiable reasons for trends in pupils' progress and never resort to excuses. You want the best for all pupils at Lickey Hills, and you have carefully nurtured a staff who give high priority to developing pupils' well-being and happiness as well as their academic success. You have been careful to support all staff and develop their emerging strengths. As a result, some have taken on roles of significant responsibility within the school.

Pupils enjoy learning. They reported that learning was fun because teachers 'teach us a lot in a fun way'. A group of Year 6 pupils explained that they enjoy the 'chilli challenge' where they choose the level of challenge they think best suits their understanding, 'hot, hotter or hottest'. Pupils demonstrate a high level of care for each other. In Years 5 and 6 pupils readily take on responsibilities to help younger pupils at lunchtimes to ensure that they have activities or someone to play with. Older pupils explained, 'We're at the top of the school so we must be good examples.' In lessons, pupils take pride in their presentation and accuracy. They adopt the correct subject-related vocabulary to explain their understanding, check their work or apply appropriate skills. Pupils typically persevere with given tasks and

clearly enjoy teachers' carefully planned lessons which inspire pupils' interest and imagination. You have recently developed before- and after-school care for pupils in the Hive. Pupils reported how much they enjoyed the facilities, activities and appreciated the care provided.

Since the last inspection in 2014, the deputy headteacher has transformed the way phonics is taught. Rather than being taught in class bases, pupils from early years to Year 3 are taught in flexible ability groups so that the teaching is carefully targeted to pupils' needs and strengths. Teaching assistants and teachers received effective training in teaching phonics so that they are better skilled to work independently. In addition, they adopted good practice following visits to other schools. All adults frequently assess pupils so that planned learning is suitably adapted to support or appropriately challenge the pupils' developing abilities and skills. Pupils are increasingly aware that their knowledge of phonics should be applied to their writing. For example, one pupil correctly selected words with different spellings but identical sound and wrote, 'I went to the shop to buy two apples but the bag was too small.' The assistant special educational needs coordinator and the language base teacher have significantly contributed their expertise to the new way of teaching phonics. Leaders introduced workshops for parents to help them support their children at home. Furthermore, leaders have developed a school website page for home activities so phonics work in school can be further developed at home. The proportion of pupils achieving the Year 1 phonics screening check has improved since the last inspection and was broadly in line with the national average in 2018.

The outdoor area is now zoned according to planned activities for example, ball games and suitable equipment for activities are organised by lunchtime supervisors. The parent teacher association helpfully purchased additional outdoor equipment following their survey of pupils' views and ideas. Year 5 and 6 pupils are trained play leaders and they initiate games and activities for younger pupils as well as ensure that young pupils are safe. Pupils can also opt to attend a nurture group at lunchtimes for more personal support, for example during times of personal difficulties. In addition, there are quiet areas for pupils to chat.

Safeguarding is effective.

All staff and governors convey a strong commitment to pupils' safety and well-being. You expect all staff to be tenacious in their observations of pupils and confident to report any safeguarding concerns. The designated safeguarding leads (DSLs) are fully trained and ensure that all staff receive annual safeguarding training at the beginning of the school year. An aspect of safeguarding is introduced in weekly communication meetings so that staff are fully aware of local issues and receive up-to-date information. All referrals are appropriately followed up and you keep in close contact with external agencies when needed. The pastoral staff know individual families well and provide considerable support for both the adults and pupils involved.

Pupils are taught about healthy relationships and know who to speak to if they have

any worries or concern. Regular events are planned to practise fire alarm and lock-down procedures. All staff consider the outcomes of these practices and contribute to what went well and what could be further improved. All related policies and procedures reflect up-to-date government guidance. Appropriate recruitment and vetting checks are carried out for staff, volunteers and governors.

Inspection findings

- At the time of the last inspection children entered the early years with the knowledge and skills typical for their age. More recently, children have entered with more complex needs, including those related to speech and language. Over the last three years, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development has improved and remains broadly in line with the national average.
- The deputy headteacher and the assistant special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) provided staff with clear procedures to identify pupils' specific needs and deliver the necessary, well-tailored support so that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) achieve well. They carefully considered ways to track the small steps of pupils' progress so that future planning and support is pertinent for pupil's individual needs. As a result of training, support and clear procedures, staff are increasingly able to take on their initial responsibilities to meet pupils' needs and refer pupils to a higher level of support if necessary. Teaching assistants are skilled in providing substantial, well-informed support for pupils. In addition, they develop successful initiatives to prepare pupils for a lesson or manage effectively those pupils who have behavioural difficulties.
- All pupils in the resource base have speech and language needs but some have additional and more complex medical difficulties. These pupils follow carefully designed learning sessions and go on to make good progress; many return successfully to mainstream education. The resource-based pupils integrate with classes appropriate for their age in a wide range of subjects and go on to develop friendships with their peers at playtimes.
- Leaders' analysis of pupils' progress and attainment in writing, and information gained from monitoring lessons, led to changes in the way writing was taught. Staff were increasingly able to plan lessons to cover the necessary content of the subject. Nevertheless, leaders were concerned about how well pupils acquired the necessary writing knowledge and applied the relevant literacy skills in their work. Staff now teach lessons which regularly focus on spelling, punctuation and grammar and provide opportunities for pupils to practise the learned skills in sentences and a range of writing purposes. Staff introduce pupils to a range of books and literature to raise pupils' awareness of different authors' writing styles. Improvements in the teaching of writing have had a positive impact. In 2018, the proportion of Year 6 pupils who achieved the expected standard and that of greater depth in writing was above the national average.
- The senior leadership team and the leader for mathematics have brought about considerable improvements in the way mathematics is taught, thereby improving the progress that pupils make and the standards they achieve in the subject. Leaders provided good training and introduced a mathematics scheme to support teachers' understanding of the appropriate age-related expectations for individual

year groups. The mathematics scheme has successfully helped teachers to sequentially plan pupils' learning better and identify more readily where gaps in pupils' knowledge or understanding persist so that they can be addressed quickly. Pupils say that they enjoy mathematics and they appreciate their journals where they can explore a range of mathematical methods before selecting a preferred solution to any problems encountered. Teachers' assessments of pupils' progress are showing more accuracy and staff are increasingly able to identify what must be taught for pupils to achieve the next steps in learning. Nevertheless, initiatives remain at an early stage and the momentum of change and improvement lacks a sense of urgency to ensure that the most able pupils achieve the higher standards appropriate for their age.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- leaders and staff continue to improve the rates of pupils' progress in mathematics so that the most able pupils achieve the higher standards appropriate for their age.

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

Yours sincerely

Deana Holdaway
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection I met with you, the deputy headteacher, the leader for mathematics, five governors and a groups of Year 6 pupils. We visited lessons together and looked at pupils' work across a range of subjects. We considered evidence of current pupils' progress and the outcomes of recent tests and assessments. We considered the current evidence of the progress made by pupils with SEND. I read a range of school policies including those for safeguarding, child protection and curriculum. I took account of the school's self-evaluation, plans for development and safeguarding practices.