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Mrs Linda Deeley
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Deeley

Short inspection of Whitecrest Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 24 November 2015, 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 May 2011.

This school continues to be good.

This is a good school that is doing very well. Your leadership is calm, thoughtful and ambitious. You have created a climate where pupils and staff get the praise they deserve and the guidance they need. Under your leadership, the staff team has maintained and strengthened the good quality of education on offer.

In all that they say and do, leaders and governors communicate their ambition to do the very best for each and every pupil at the school. Indeed, during this short inspection I gave careful consideration as to whether the school would be likely to be judged outstanding if it were to receive a full inspection at this time. This is because there are several significant strengths, notably: pupils' achievement in mathematics, their attitudes to school life and work, and the imagination and sense of purposeful enjoyment that teachers inject into their daily lessons. However, there is still a bit more to do in order to make sure that all pupils do as well as possible, especially in reading and writing.

School leaders and governors are alert to this because they keep a close eye on teaching and learning. Their own view about the school's current performance is spot on. Leaders know that standards are good and that teaching and pupils' achievement have continued to improve since the previous inspection. They also know that standards could be even higher and have plans in place to achieve this ambition.

In recent times, there have been a few staff changes. A new deputy headteacher was appointed in 2014 and, in September 2015, two new teachers started in Key Stage 2. These newly appointed staff and long-serving staff work well together. They are effective in their classrooms and use their different skills to good effect to drive whole-school improvement.

Pupils and parents express overwhelmingly positive views about the school. Of the parents who responded to Parent View, 99% would recommend the school to others. At the school gate, every parent I spoke with had complimentary things to say about the school's work and their children's education. Within school, pupils' enthusiasm and confidence shine out. They work hard in lessons, show respect for others and enjoy the many exciting and interesting activities that are provided for them at Whitecrest Primary.

Safeguarding is effective.

All the necessary procedures to keep pupils safe at school are in place. Leaders and staff understand what to do if they have a concern about a pupil's safety or welfare. School records show that when staff have had cause to act, they have done so with proper care and attention. The school site is well maintained by an attentive site manager, and staff and pupils display a good awareness of their responsibilities with regard to safety matters. Staff and governor training is up to date and school policies reflect current guidance and requirements. Having said this, a few administrative routines could be organised with greater efficiency so that some of the information held on files is more readily available when needed.

Inspection findings

- You provide caring leadership, underpinned by the school's values, that aims to bring out the best in everyone. You exercise good judgement, recognise the abilities and successes of others, and are steering the school in an upward direction. The key members of your leadership team are capable, articulate and effective. The school is well placed to improve further.
- Leaders are well informed about the quality of the school's work and it is clear that communication between school leaders and governors is good. It is also clear that governors bring insight and challenge to their roles. Governors are quick to ask questions and are not afraid to challenge the status quo in order to bring about change for the better.
- Teaching is good and the standards that pupils reach in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 are above average. Their progress in mathematics, in particular, is excellent. When pupils leave at the end of Year 6 they are well prepared for secondary school, both academically and socially. During their time at Whitecrest Primary, they develop values and

attitudes to learning that will serve them well in later education and in life beyond school.

- Children do extremely well in the early years class. They benefit from a well-organised learning environment, imaginative teaching and excellent links with home. Phonics teaching (letters and the sounds they represent) in the early part of the school is effective, as are procedures for managing a smooth move into Key Stage 1. Consequently, time is used well and pupils are quick to capitalise on their early gains in learning. Throughout the early years and in Key Stage 1, any pupils who need support to keep up or to catch up get extra help and all do well. This good progress continues in Key Stage 2, with progress in mathematics being particularly strong for all groups of pupils.
- Disadvantaged pupils do very well at this school. In the 2015 end of Key Stage 2 tests, for instance, these pupils were well ahead of other pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics.
- A feature of teaching and learning in all classes is the attention given to asking questions. In conversation with pupils in one class, the deputy headteacher reminded them that 'It is good to be curious.' This simple statement captures much about the school's approach to teaching and learning. Teachers think carefully about how to pitch their questions so that pupils are made to think hard, use what they know and also find out more. Similarly, in classrooms and around the school, numerous displays and messages prompt pupils to ask questions and develop enquiring minds. As pupils explained when I spoke with them, '...the teachers do not spoon feed us, we have to think for ourselves.'
- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to school are exemplary. Their attendance is well above the national average and lateness is rare. In lessons, in the playground and around the school their conduct is excellent. They show pride in their work, are attentive to their teachers, enjoy their lessons and are thoughtful and considerate in their actions. A remarkable aspect of pupils' behaviour at this school is their ability to reflect on the causes and effects of certain types of behaviour. They display a well-developed sense of empathy because teachers encourage them to think deeply about the consequences of their own and others' actions. Pupils consider the harmful effects of different types of bullying, for example, and what they can do to prevent it. Consequently, it rarely happens and, if it does, it is stopped.
- The school's work to help pupils develop these reflective caring attitudes is indicative of the high priority given to pupils' personal development. Along the corridors and in the hall there are displays that highlight the school's very effective work in this area. Pupils regularly consider the values that guide them and are prompted to think about what they can do to help others.
- Pupils have a say in how things are done at school. Governors and teachers routinely ask pupils what they think about lessons and school life, and listen to their ideas. Pupils appreciate this. The pupils I met explained that several of the recent improvements to the outdoor areas, for example, had been brought about as a result of their suggestions.

- Parents are provided with plenty of information about school life. The school's informative website is kept up to date and parents are invited into school to find out about how different subjects are taught. Homework is a well-established routine and pupils receive frequent feedback about how well they are doing at school.
- As well as the good-quality displays of work that celebrate pupils' achievements, each class produces a yearly scrapbook that captures pictures and information about class events, trips and projects. These scrapbooks say much about the broad and rich range of experiences on offer at Whitecrest Primary. Residential visits, musical performances, sports tournaments, talent shows, creative projects, numerous day trips, and visits from speakers and specialists are just some of the memorable and worthwhile activities provided for pupils each year. Pupils and parents value the breadth of activities available and are aware of the benefits these bring.
- While teaching is good and standards are above average, there is still some variability in aspects of classroom practice. Observations in classrooms and checks on books found that, at times, some pupils find it hard to keep up because they move on to new work before they fully understand the work they have just covered. In addition, for some pupils, their progress in reading and writing is not as strong as that seen in mathematics.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- teaching in Key Stage 2 focuses on boosting progress in reading and writing for those pupils who are not making quite as much progress as they do in mathematics
- teachers take care to check the depth of pupils' understanding before moving on to new work
- the administrative systems for recording safety-related information are reviewed so that documents held in school records are more readily available when needed.

This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Martin Pye
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and your deputy headteacher. I carried out short observations of teaching and learning in all year groups, met with a group of governors and a group of pupils. In addition, I talked with pupils in lessons, in the playground and in the dining hall. I spoke with parents at the beginning of the school day and had telephone conversations with two parents who wished to speak with me. I also had a telephone conversation with the school's education adviser. By the end of the inspection, there were 69 recent responses on Parent View. I took account of these and noted the school's routines for communicating with parents and gathering their views. I looked at a number of documents, including pupils' progress information; the school's own evaluation of its performance; and several school policy documents. I also checked the school's website and the procedures for keeping pupils safe. I talked with several members of staff about safeguarding matters.