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Mrs Margaret Goodwin
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Dear Mrs Goodwin

Short inspection of Warren Farm Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 9 February 2016, 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in November 2010.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since your predecessor school's last inspection. The school became an academy in July 2012.

You ensure that pupils, parents, staff and governors work in partnership to realise the school's aim of 'Together Everyone Achieves More'. With the support of school leaders, you have made sure that the many strengths of the school have been maintained and consolidated. For example, the development of pupils' reading skills is a strength throughout the school. Your effective practice in developing pupils' reading has been shared with a number of schools from Stoke-on-Trent who have visited Warren Farm to see the successful teaching approaches in action. In addition, proportions of pupils achieving the expected standard in phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) and English grammar, punctuation and spelling have been above national figures for the last two years. Your desire to further raise standards and to serve the community within which the school resides is unmistakable. You and your staff actively promote values such as respect, kindness, honesty, hard work, caring, cooperation and responsibility. As a result, pupils' conduct and attitudes to learning are excellent and there is a calm and purposeful atmosphere throughout the school.

You have a determination to improve the school further. You share this with all those involved with the school. You recognise, rightly, that improving pupils' writing

skills is a priority. You and your leaders have prioritised the development of teachers' subject knowledge and ensuring that pupils receive written and verbal feedback from staff that helps them improve their work. Pupils also have increased opportunities to write for different purposes and audiences in subjects other than English, for example in science, and in topic work such as history and geography. Information provided by the school and the work in pupils' books shows that in the majority of classes the quality of pupils' writing is rapidly improving.

Pupils' progress in mathematics is secure in the majority of classes. You recognise that in Year 2 and Year 4 pupils' mathematical skills are less well developed as a result of teaching that is less effective than the best practice seen elsewhere in the school. School leaders are taking effective action to resolve this issue.

Children enter the school's Nursery and Reception classes with literacy, numeracy and personal development skills that are well below what is typical for their age group. Many children are known to be vulnerable. As the result of effective teaching, care and support, children quickly settle into the school's routines and make good, and sometimes better, progress from their starting points. The 2015 Early Years Foundation Stage profile shows that the gap between girls' and boys' progress evident in 2014 has been closed.

The governing body supports you and the work of the school. They are keen for pupils to do well and to take their place as responsible citizens in the local and wider community. They manage the school budget well and ensure that the school provides value for money. However, they are less effective in ensuring that the school policies and website are free from administrative mistakes and meet current government guidelines. Despite these mistakes, all of the policies and procedures are in place and effective. Governors are overly reliant on the information you provide about pupils' progress. They are clear about the school's many strengths but do not have a detailed understanding of what the school needs to do to improve.

Safeguarding is effective.

You make sure that protecting pupils from harm is a high priority for all staff and governors. You have made sure that all safeguarding arrangements meet current requirements and are fit for purpose. Record keeping is suitably detailed, of high quality and securely stored. Training is provided for all aspects of safeguarding, such as identifying the risks posed by extremist groups, sexual predators and the use of social media. Homophobia and homophobic bullying training was recently delivered demonstrating your desire to keep staff informed and up to date on issues that can negatively affect children's lives. Staff are vigilant and watchful for anything that might indicate pupils are in danger. Concerns are rigorously followed up and you have effective links with different agencies, including health professionals and social workers, to support potentially vulnerable children and their families. Governors have a good grasp of their duty to safeguard children and receive regular reports from the school's leaders. A number of governors and leaders have completed safer recruitment training. The checks on staff's suitability to work with children are thorough and rigorous.

You have a swift and well-organised response to any absence and you appropriately challenge parents about any long-term absence. As a result, absence and persistent absence levels (missing more than 15% of days from school) are consistently well below national figures.

Pupils' understanding of how to keep safe and avoid risks is developed through a variety of lessons, assemblies and visiting speakers. For example, you have worked with the police to deliver 'Caught in the Web', a programme to improve pupils' understanding of internet safety. Pupils told me that they feel safe in school and that any bullying issues are quickly and effectively resolved. The vast majority of parents who completed the school's own questionnaire agree that their children feel safe in the school.

Inspection findings

- Pupils enjoy coming to Warren Farm Primary School. They attend well and there are very few who are persistently absent. Their conduct in and around school and their attitudes to learning in class are excellent. The vast majority of pupils are motivated, keen and enjoy the challenge of learning something new. There have been no fixed-term or permanent exclusions in the last three years. Pupils told me that they feel safe in school and that all staff help them improve their learning and behaviour. All the pupils who spoke with me said that they knew who to go to if they had a problem. Relationships amongst pupils and between pupils and staff are good and contribute to a positive climate for learning.
- A very large majority of pupils throughout the school do well as a result of the lively and well-focused teaching. Most teachers plan well for the different needs of the pupils in their classes, including those who have special educational needs or disability. As a result, this group of pupils' achievement is in line with, or sometimes better than, national figures.
- Most pupils are able to improve their work and develop their knowledge and understanding as a result of the helpful and constructive feedback they receive from staff. However, a few pupils in Year 2 and Year 4 receive feedback that is less effective, particularly in mathematics. Pupils' progress in this subject is inhibited as a result.
- Children in the Nursery and Reception Year make good progress, academically and socially, from very low starting points. You have taken action to maintain and improve provision for pupils in the early years, including improving the provision for outdoor play and learning. Children enjoy making appropriate choices about their learning, indoors and outdoors, suitably guided by adults.
- You have forged good links with parents. The vast majority of parents who responded to the school's questionnaire greatly appreciate the difference you and your staff make to their child's social and academic development. You have measures in place to make sure that there is a good attendance at parents' evenings. For example, you provide a crèche on these evenings to look after the parents' children while parents meet with teachers.

- Pupils throughout the school make good progress in reading and in understanding and interpreting what they have read. The effective teaching of phonics quickly helps pupils read without assistance. Pupils enjoy the opportunities to read a variety of texts and read with fluency and expression.
- You correctly identified that pupils were not making the progress expected of them in writing. You have tackled this by improving the verbal and written feedback pupils receive from teachers and by developing teachers' approaches to improving pupils' writing. You also make sure that pupils have opportunities to write for different purposes and audiences in subjects other than literacy. Information provided by the school and the work in pupils' literacy and topic books shows that the quality of pupils' writing is rapidly improving.
- The vast majority of pupils do well in mathematics as a result of the effective teaching they receive. However, a few pupils in Year 2 and Year 4 do not have enough work that stretches and challenges their capabilities. This is particularly the case for disadvantaged pupils in Year 2.
- The checks on the quality of learning and teaching are thorough and enable you to identify and support pupils and staff who are underperforming. You use staff appraisal to set targets against which staff performance can be measured. You provide appropriate and effective training for staff that helps teachers and support staff to improve their practice. This is particularly so for staff new to the school.
- The school's self-assessment accurately identifies the school's strengths and weaknesses. However, some of the school's improvement plans do not describe exactly what will be achieved by actions designed to raise standards. You and governors recognise that specific and measurable targets that have clear deadlines and milestones will help leaders measure the impact of the school's work more easily.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- the assessment and feedback in lessons and in pupils' books in Year 2 and Year 4 matches the effective practice seen elsewhere in the school
- pupils in Year 2 and Year 4 are given work in mathematics that stretches their capabilities and rapidly improves their knowledge and understanding
- in Year 2, the achievement gap in mathematics between pupils who are disadvantaged and other pupils in the school and nationally is closed
- the school's policies and website are fully compliant and meet current government guidelines
- governors have an incisive understanding of external information about pupils' progress in order to challenge and support school leaders better
- the school's action plans are clear about what success will look like, when targets will be met and how actions will be checked.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for Birmingham City Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Peter Humphries
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this one day inspection I met with you, your leadership team and other staff to discuss the work of the school. I observed pupils' learning in classes in early years, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. During these observations, I looked at pupils' work and spoke to them about their learning. I also spoke informally to pupils about behaviour, attendance, how they learn to keep themselves safe and about what it feels like to be a member of the Warren Farm Primary School community. I also carried out an extensive scrutiny of pupils' books. I observed pupils' behaviour at lunchtime as well as in lessons. Discussions with four school governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body and a telephone conversation with your school improvement partner helped to provide additional information. I looked at a range of school documents, including the checks on staff's suitability to work with children, the minutes of governors' meetings and the school's information about pupils' progress, attainment, behaviour and attendance. There were too few responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, for these to be considered. However, I was able to analyse the results of the school's own questionnaire to parents. There were no replies to the staff and pupil questionnaires.