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Mrs C Prynne
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Dear Mrs Prynne

Short inspection of Widewell Primary Academy

Following my visit to the school on 18 May 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 the predecessor school was judged to be good in October 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education since the school converted to academy status. This is a school on an upward trajectory.

Since your appointment as headteacher 15 months ago, you have created an aspirational, enthusiastic and self-assured team. Your relentless optimism and drive have gained the confidence of all the staff and members of the governing body. You have enabled other leaders and managers in the school to develop in their roles so that they too are driving improvements, particularly in the school's provision for mathematics, English and special educational needs. These leaders are successfully improving pupils' achievements because you have given them authority, support and training for their areas of responsibility.

Visits to classrooms, scrutiny of pupils' work and analysis of your own records demonstrate that the quality of teaching is typically and securely good. A higher than average proportion of children who completed Reception achieved a good level of development in 2015. This is a dramatic improvement compared with previous years. Although having slightly dipped, the proportion of pupils who reach the expected standard in the national phonics (the sounds that letters make) check at the end of Year 1 remains above that seen nationally.

During our joint visits to lessons, we saw some excellent examples of older pupils and adults deliberating about different ways of solving interesting mathematical problems. The emphasis was on the process rather than the answer. Pupils' estimation, numerical reasoning and communication skills in mathematics have considerably improved. Pupils told me how much they enjoyed their new ways of learning. Looking at pupils' work, the changes are clearly enabling them to make better progress than a year ago and to think more deeply and widely about their work. Teachers have begun to adapt the way that they teach in other subjects too, because they have identified that some of the most-able pupils need even greater challenge.

Safeguarding is effective.

Staff take safeguarding and the protection of children very seriously. They ensure that pupils are kept safe and thrive when in school. Having received appropriate training, staff are well focused, for example, on keeping pupils safe from the risks of radicalisation, extremism and child exploitation. Leaders with responsibility for safeguarding hold up-to-date qualifications at the required level.

Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, for example when using electronic devices and the internet. They understand the risks of sharing information with people they do not really know.

The school works robustly with other agencies and services to ensure the safety of pupils and staff. All of the safeguarding documents, processes and procedures are appropriate, recorded clearly and successfully applied. The governing body takes an active role in checking that staff implement the school's safeguarding policies meticulously.

Inspection findings

- Local schools are keen to work in partnership with you because they have seen the improvements that you have made and the skilful way that you have implemented them.
- The new system to measure pupils' progress is simple but effective. You and other leaders carefully monitor the achievement of different groups of pupils. These groups include: pupils who are entitled to the pupil premium, those with special educational needs or disability, service family pupils, and boys and girls separately. This work helps you to generate the accurate reports that you prepare for the governing body that show achievement gaps between these different groups are narrowing. In turn, governors provide you with a good level of support and challenge.
- Topics and themes are chosen by teachers working together and sharing their subject expertise. This is helping to make meaningful links between subjects, which are exciting and enthusing pupils to learn. In particular, pupils told me how much they enjoyed conducting research and sharing their findings with classmates as part of their topic work.

- In September 2015, you appointed a parent support adviser. She is successfully working closely with parents, pupils, staff and the family workers in The Ark, a family room, which gives the best possible support to school and community families. Pupils told me that they really appreciated being able to visit her room in school when they feel sad, particularly at lunch times.
- The HMS Heroes' pupils help to support each other and celebrate being part of a family with someone in the armed forces. They also help other pupils to understand what it is like to be part of a service family.
- The rebranding of the school lunch servery as the hungry caterpillar cafe is a renowned success. Enticing hot meals, the attractive 'deli' option and the hungry caterpillar after-school club are admirably supporting the school's national healthy school award.
- In lessons, pupils are keen to learn and try their best. They work well with each other and the adults who support their learning. They cooperate, share equipment and behave responsibly. At break times, I noticed that some pupils, although not being aggressive or unkind, were not playing as nicely as they might. These pupils appeared to lack skills in play and consideration of others when playing.
- You are vigilant, but considerate, in checking that everyone follows the school's rules and policies. You and the staff team ensure that praise is given publicly and that when sanctions are needed, they are relayed in private.
- The new behaviour policy is working well in school. However, a few pupils have behaved inappropriately outside of school. You have made good use of the police community support officer to promote good behaviour in the local area and to help ensure that pupils understand how to keep themselves safe from bullying. However, you are rightly trying to find more ways to involve parents and the local community in the work of the school. For example, you have changed the time of Friday celebration assembly to encourage parents to stay and socialise before taking their children home at the end of the day.
- The appointment of a caretaker, the first time for years, has enabled fixtures and fittings to be replaced and renewed. These improvements, along with the refurbishment of the school buildings that is underway, are greatly appreciated by everyone in the school community.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the school builds on the improvements already made to the assessment of pupils' progress in English and mathematics so that teaching and pupils' achievement continue to improve in all subjects, particularly for the most able
- pupils develop their play and social skills at break times
- community involvement continues to be a priority for the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Steffi Penny
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you, other leaders, members of the governing body and pupils. We visited all classes, including the Nursery. I watched pupils at play and lunchtime. I spoke with pupils during lessons and scrutinised the quality of their work. I took account of the responses to a staff survey and those by parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.

A wide range of documentary evidence was considered, including records relating to safeguarding, the quality of teaching, the curriculum, assessment information and teachers' records.