

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
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Mr David Pyle  
Headteacher  
Weald Community Primary School  
Long Barn Road  
Weald  
Sevenoaks  
Kent  
TN14 6PY

Dear Mr Pyle

### **Short inspection of Weald Community Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 14 June 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 school was judged to be good in October 2011.

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

Leaders have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You are a dedicated and visionary leader who models the highest standards to both staff and pupils. This is a small but vibrant village school that serves its community well under your leadership. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school. They describe leaders at the school as 'open and approachable' and say that 'you take action immediately to address any concerns'. The school is a safe and happy place where children are well looked after.

You constantly reflect on what is going well and have actively sought out the best practice to improve teaching and learning. Consequently, teaching remains at least good, and in Reception and key stage 1 is highly effective. As a result, many pupils are now achieving higher standards than expected. However, in 2015 the progress of the most able pupils at the end of key stage 2 in mathematics was not as strong as in reading or writing. You and the governors are aware of this issue and have taken steps to address this by working in partnership with other schools. As a result, more pupils are developing the essential skills in mathematics so that they achieve the highest standards.

The school works particularly well with local schools and the local authority. You have made the most of the collaboration with an outstanding school to check that your approaches to improving teaching are making a difference. You also work well with the secondary and independent schools and have established a strong relationship with a school in Africa.

You have developed a team of leaders who are committed to ensuring that the pupils at Weald Community Primary School are well prepared for the next stage of their education. There are good systems to manage staff performance and staff feel well supported because there are opportunities to observe others teach and discuss what works best. You have created a real team ethos where every member of staff takes a lead on aspects of the school's work and contributes to school improvement. In the Ofsted survey, all staff reported that they are happy and proud to work in the school and that they value your leadership highly.

You have addressed the area for improvement identified at the last inspection effectively. You have introduced a more robust system to check on the progress that pupils make. Leaders and governors now regularly review the progress of all pupils, especially the most vulnerable. The system is used well to check on the difference teachers make to pupils' learning as well as to plan further support for those who need to catch up. This new system is working so well that you are now sharing this aspect of your work with other local schools.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Governors and leaders are committed to keeping pupils safe. There are robust procedures and thorough training for staff in place. The governor responsible has specialist expertise, which is well used to regularly check the school's practices. As a result, record-keeping is comprehensive and policies are regularly reviewed. You are also tenacious in ensuring that other agencies carry out their responsibilities so that all pupils are well cared for and feel safe. Parents endorse this view and say that the school 'has a really kind and nurturing feel'.

### **Inspection findings**

- You and the governors have high expectations for all pupils. You know the school well; your evaluation of the school's strengths and areas for improvement is accurate and thorough. The school improvement plan is a useful document that you use to raise standards, although you are clear that there are still a few areas of the school's work that require further attention.
- The new assessment system is now well developed and gives you and other leaders high-quality information on how much progress pupils make. You and your teachers know the pupils very well and have a good grasp of their individual needs and their achievements. This is especially the case for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disability or those who are disadvantaged.
- Following a review in 2015, governors are now much more effective than in the past. They have streamlined their approach to supporting school leaders. They regularly visit the school to check that leaders are making a difference to standards by asking 'Is this working?' Governors also adroitly use information on pupils' progress to challenge leaders and hold them to account in more formal settings.

- Pupils in 2015 achieved standards above the national average in reading and mathematics in key stage 1 and in reading and writing in key stage 2. The most able pupils' attainment in mathematics was broadly in line with the national average in key stage 1 but below in key stage 2. Current information shows that some pupils are developing depth in their subjects but that fewer pupils than you would expect are currently exceeding expectations in mathematics and writing.
- You recognise that the progress of pupils in mathematics, especially the most able, could be improved and you are taking robust steps to address this. There is evidence that pupils' problem-solving skills are developing because teachers are increasing the level of challenge and providing more opportunities for pupils to use reasoning in their lessons. However, you acknowledge that these approaches are new this year and are not yet consistently applied.
- You have worked very effectively to improve standards of writing. In 2015, pupils at the end of key stages 1 and 2 achieved significantly above the national average. Pupils are now writing well across the curriculum using different techniques to improve their writing. For example, Year 2 pupils wrote adeptly about the differences between their toys and those of children in Malawi. However, some of the new strategies to help pupils write in depth are not yet applied across all subjects.
- Pupils enjoy reading and standards are high. Teachers ensure that pupils learn the appropriate reading techniques and that there is a wide choice of books that stretch and challenge them. For example, pupils in key stage 2 said they read widely and often and that if they chose a book that was too easy, the teacher would recommend a more appropriate one.
- In 2015, the gap widened between the numbers of girls and boys achieving a good level of development and you correctly identified the progress of boys in early years as an area that required attention. As a result, you have ensured that there is extra support for boys to develop their fine motor skills. Learning journals and current assessment information show a significant increase in the number of children, especially boys, achieving a good level of development in 2016.
- The teaching of phonics is a strength of the early years and key stage 1 teaching, and well integrated into all aspects of the curriculum. As a result, in 2015 there was a significant increase in the number of pupils, well above the national average, who reached the expected standard.
- The progress of the very few pupils who are disadvantaged or have special educational needs and/or disabilities is improving because additional adults are well used and there are effective systems in place to support them. Other pupils who need extra support to catch up receive it, and current information shows that the majority of pupils are making expected progress across all subjects.

- Pupils relish learning. They try hard and are proud of their work. Your drive to develop pupils' confidence and resilience is paying off as they talk about how they want to complete the 'challenges' teachers set. This is evident throughout the school, including in Reception Year where, for example, children persevered with numeracy work that they found very difficult.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is used well to challenge pupils to think and explore. For example, Year 3 pupils were examining carrots and identifying the key features of roots as part of a project on the rainforest. They were completely absorbed in the task and learning new vocabulary to help them explain how plants store energy.
- You have developed a curriculum that excites pupils. Your work to broaden and expand the curriculum so that it incorporates connections with a school in Malawi is inspiring. As a result, pupils have a very good understanding of their place in the world and regularly tackle complex issues such as globalisation. There are also extensive opportunities for children and pupils to learn outside the classroom, including cookery, sewing and 'eco' clubs.
- There is very effective use of the additional funding for sports so that pupils enjoy a wide range of opportunities to develop their talents. Pupils also have access to regular specialist music teaching so that all pupils take part in an orchestra or a choir.
- You and your staff involve pupils in the life of the school and value their views. Pupils and parents highlighted how well the school develops the leadership skills of pupils who act as ambassadors, reading buddies and pupil leaders. As a result, pupils are confident in giving their views; for example, a child in Reception Year interacted well with the visitors leading the whole-school assembly.
- The overall attendance of pupils is well above the national average. The attendance of vulnerable groups has improved since the previous year and is just below that of others.
- You work very well in partnership with parents to support the learning of their children. There is a strong parent-teacher association that raises funds for the school. You have used these funds to purchase equipment such as the school radio that you use well to develop pupils' speaking and listening skills. Parents also volunteer to support enrichment activities in the school and help with trips and events.
- Behaviour around the school is excellent. Pupils listen well to each other and adults; they respond well to instructions and are polite and respectful to visitors. Pupils play well together, in their class groups and across the age range. Parents and pupils reported that 'there is a real feeling of family at our school, a real feeling of community'.

## **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- further improve the teaching of writing and mathematics, especially in key stage 2, so that the most able develop greater depth and mastery.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the director of children's services for Kent County Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Seamus Murphy  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

One inspector visited the school for one day. There were meetings with you, your leaders and governors as well as a phone call with a representative of the local authority. Policies around safeguarding, your own analyses of pupils' achievement and other documents were scrutinised. The inspector visited all year groups to see teaching and learning as well as visiting an assembly. There were formal and informal meetings with pupils. The inspector also looked at pupils' work in lessons and with leaders. The 126 responses to Parent View and both online and written questionnaires from staff and pupils were analysed as well as taking into account the views of parents who spoke to the inspector informally at the end of the school day.