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25 July 2016

A Parsons
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Parsons

Short inspection of Worplesdon Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 30 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 July 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The school offers a wide-ranging, rich curriculum. Pupils really enjoy this and gain much from it. They have good and well-structured opportunities to participate in art, music, drama, sport and many other great lessons and activities. The school also promotes good values and pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well. The longstanding status as a Unicef Rights Respecting school and the regular programme of values teaching are very helpful to this. All these positive activities motivate pupils and, as a result of the good teaching throughout the school, they achieve well in very many areas, including English and mathematics.

At its last inspection, the school was asked to increase the opportunities for pupils to engage in problem-solving activities in mathematics. This has been achieved. Pupils develop strong skills as learners. You ensure that many of the learning tasks they undertake are connected to 'real life'. For example, pupils enjoyed drafting letters to you asking for longer playtimes, no uniform and a shorter school day. They developed their persuasive writing skills well. Nevertheless, despite their paying you many proper compliments, and coming up with some considered reasons, you reminded them kindly that they would have to be 'especially persuasive' to achieve any of these aims! This was an example of something else that is special about the school: the positive relationships, rooted in mutual respect and good humour.

The school has continued to move forward and develop well since the last inspection. You gave clear evidence that the school achieves its plans. It is steadily and reliably improving. It does not make knee-jerk reactions to initiatives or pressures. It considers things carefully. There is a strong sense of community and pupils benefit much from this. However, it is also true that pupils do not yet, overall, make outstanding progress or always attain quite as highly as they might. More is still possible. There are still some inconsistencies in teaching which make this so. Some of these are outlined below. Furthermore, the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan are not as fruitful as they could be at sharpening up the current good practice so that it is exemplary. In particular, the school improvement plan does not clearly identify the better outcomes for pupils the actions are intended to achieve. The school's self-evaluation is honest but tends to accentuate the positive, rather than identifying crisply the areas needing to improve.

Parents like the school. However, there are some who have not found the school easy to work with. You recognise that the school can do more to involve parents in its life and are working on this. One parent described the school as 'cosy'. This was a compliment, highlighting rightly the happiness, care and sense of togetherness at Worplesdon. Yet this 'cosiness', a great strength, can also be a restraint. The school would benefit at times from challenging itself to improve a little more briskly.

Safeguarding is effective.

The school looks after its pupils well. All safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. Staff are regularly trained in safeguarding procedures, which they readily understand. The school site is both protected and hospitable. The school makes systematic checks on staff and others who come into contact with the children. Pupils feel secure and happy. Any who need any particular support or help receive it quickly. The chair of the governing body checks the school's processes vigilantly. Risks are carefully assessed and pupils enjoy safe and purposeful activity on and off the school site.

Inspection findings

- You have led the school, with evident distinction, over many years. You ensure that the school is purposeful and successful. Staff love working at the school and many, like you, give long service.
- Members of staff have well-defined leadership responsibilities. All subjects are well led. Subject leaders take clear responsibility and accountability. They are highly effective and this is a main reason why the curriculum is so inspiring.
- The deputy headteacher makes a strong contribution. In particular, she leads the provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities most effectively. Staff really appreciate the availability of senior leaders and the support they provide.

- The school improvement plan is put together in a very collegiate way. It fully achieves what it sets out to. However, it does not clearly state how pupils benefit from its provisions and what they should achieve as a result. This makes it less fruitful than it could be.
- School self-evaluation also tends to focus on actions achieved more than the difference the school has made to what pupils can do, know and understand. It is honest but just a little too positive and does not help leaders set sharp objectives in the school improvement plan.
- Staff performance is appropriately managed. Teachers and other staff members are both challenged and supported to be successful. The school arranges valuable training and development opportunities. Decisions about staff pay are properly made.
- Teaching is good. Teachers engage their pupils well. They explain things clearly, setting suitable tasks for the pupils. They ask good questions, helping pupils to think and be successful in their learning. Regular lesson observations and coaching help teachers to consider and improve their practice. This leads to positive outcomes. For example, pupils' writing is good across the school. It is well structured and fit for purpose. The content is often carefully considered or imaginative.
- Pupils read well. Those who read to inspectors did so with confidence, enjoyment and good expression. They could sound out tricky words quickly, showing the success of the school's work to improve its provision in phonics (linking letters and sounds).
- Year 1 pupils did well in the national phonics screening test in 2015, as did previous cohorts. Pupils' performance in the national tests last year in Years 2 and 6 was also strong. Pupils were well prepared for the next stages of education. The school has gathered valid information that pupils are currently achieving well across the school in English and mathematics, as well as other subjects.
- The small number of disadvantaged pupils, entitled to the support of the pupil premium funding, generally fare well. They do as well as the others. Pupil premium funding is imaginatively and correctly spent. However, the school does not analyse the impact of the expenditure sharply.
- The early years are well led and improving well. Children are carefully assessed in the Reception classes and given well-planned learning activities which take close account of their needs and interests. This is a vibrant and exciting provision, indoors and out. Children make good progress across all areas from their mixed starting points. In 2015, more children than the average reached a good level of development.
- Despite all of these successes, there are some inconsistencies and imperfections in teaching, which lead to some pupils' outcomes being less good than they might be. During the lessons briefly observed, work of suitable challenge was not always provided to all pupils. In a physical education lesson, pupils enjoyed their activity but were not always sufficiently engaged in learning. Some of the pupils' reading books seen by inspectors were not quite hard enough for them.

- Pupils' good writing is not always well presented, especially by older pupils. Occasionally, in younger classes, writing tasks do not allow pupils the freedom to give of their best.
- Such areas of lesser strength should be more closely identified by the school and dealt with more robustly. In a few respects, the generally strong 2015 national results fell short of excellence. For instance, pupils who had done well in reading in Year 2 in 2011 had not made quite enough further progress by the time they left the school in 2015.
- Pupils behave very well. They are always ready to learn. They happily take on responsibilities and are kind and friendly. They make good, safe use of the currently limited playground space. Pupils say that serious misbehaviour is rare, and well dealt with by staff. This view is supported by parents and the school's own records.
- Pupils' attendance is slightly above average and showing improvement.
- The governing body is well organised and supportive of the school. Its members challenge the school to improve. However, this challenge is not well recorded in the minutes of governing body meetings or constantly followed up to check that improvements have happened.
- The local authority provides a very low level of support to the school. This hampers the school's efforts to improve. The school works usefully with other local schools, but you and your staff receive too little robust, impartial external professional support and challenge. The school itself has also not been sufficiently proactive in brokering such support.
- The local authority, however, has arranged funding for a lovely new building at the school, which is now complete and in use. This is to help meet increasing local demand for school places. However, although the new building has a lift shaft, the local authority has not funded a lift. This means that the upper floor is inaccessible to some pupils and adults who have disabilities.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning are more rigorous and ambitious, identifying sharply what needs to change, and closely related to analyses of outcomes for pupils, including through the use of the pupil premium grant for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds
- they consider whether and how the school might usefully avail itself of high-quality external advice and support.

Yours sincerely

Robin Hammerton
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I visited lessons across the school, jointly with the headteacher. I scrutinised pupils' work, especially their writing. I talked with pupils informally and heard pupils from Years 2 and 5 read. I observed around the school, including at the end of an assembly, and at playtime and lunchtime. I held discussions with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, members of staff, governors, and parents as they collected their children. I looked carefully at the 104 responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I evaluated documents, including the school improvement plans, its self-evaluation, minutes of meetings and information about pupils' progress.