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Mrs Rachel Hughes
Headteacher
Wychbold First and Nursery School
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Dear Mrs Hughes

Short inspection of Wychbold First and Nursery School

Following my visit to the school on 12 July 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 November 2010.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Having been the headteacher for eight years at Wychbold, you know the families and pupils extremely well. You take pride in leading a dedicated teaching team and ensuring that the school contributes strongly to the local community. You have established a learning culture where children feel safe, enjoy school and work hard. This is because all adults provide high-quality care and education and have a good knowledge of pupils' different needs and abilities. Pupils and parents value the small school environment which Wychbold offers. As one pupil so aptly put it, 'I like being in a small school because I know everyone here'.

Since the previous inspection, you have ensured that pupils continue to make good progress. A growing number of pupils join or leave the school mid-way through different key stages, and there are increasing numbers of pupils joining, or being identified, who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Effective support is provided and their work shows that these pupils make good progress from their starting points.

The issues from the previous inspection have been fully addressed. Those identified included developing pupils' national and global awareness and ensuring that subject leaders play a full role in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning. Pupils have a good understanding of and respect for people from other countries and those who have different beliefs.

This is because interesting curriculum topics enable them to study other cultures and countries, for example Brazil, and pupils are involved in different activities to raise funds for international charities. Subject leaders provide good levels of support to colleagues. They evaluate teaching and provide feedback to help teachers improve further.

While all pupils achieve well, you recognise that more could still be done, especially in closing attainment gaps between boys and girls and raising the level of challenge, especially for the most able pupils. While you and your governors have identified the right priorities in your school improvement plan, you acknowledge that the key priorities could be more sharply focused and measurable milestones put in place to help evaluate the impact of actions taken. Good systems are in place to check on the attendance of pupils, but the attendance of some pupils, including the small number who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, is below average.

Safeguarding is effective.

As the appointed leader for safeguarding, you take your responsibilities very seriously. You have ensured that your own training, and that of the staff and governors, is up to date so that you are clear about recognising signs of abuse and what actions to take. You follow safeguarding procedures meticulously and ensure that any concerns raised are reported quickly and well documented. You carry out stringent checks on staff before appointment to ensure they are fit to work with pupils. Robust risk assessments are made before pupils go on trips, to identify potential hazards.

Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe. Safety is taught well in assemblies and through the curriculum. Road safety, fire drills, cycle training and e-safety lessons ensure that pupils know how to avoid potential dangers. Governors talk to pupils during their visits to school to assure themselves that pupils feel safe, and are safe. High levels of respect and tolerance ensure that the school is a happy and harmonious environment. While 'anti-bullying week' features on the school calendar and on posters in classrooms, the ethos of respect is well embedded as pupils say, 'every week is anti-bullying here as it shouldn't happen'.

Inspection findings

- As an experienced headteacher, you are not complacent; you recognise the need to consistently improve teaching and raise achievement. You appointed a deputy headteacher in January 2016 to strengthen the leadership capacity within the school and you extended the roles of subject leaders. Together, you have introduced new schemes to improve the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics. Staff have received training on the new initiatives introduced to ensure they have the necessary skills and knowledge to teach them well. Good links have also been established with local schools in order to access wider staff training and share good practice and ideas.

- Together with your leadership team, you carry out regular checks on the quality of teaching and learning. You have altered your approach to monitoring this year to reflect changes made to teaching. Leaders now focus more intently on the impact of teaching. You have ongoing discussions with staff about observations and recommendations made so that staff are clear and able to adapt their teaching accordingly. Good-quality coaching and mentoring is provided by subject leaders for all staff, including those new to teaching and support staff. Follow-up checks are made to ensure that changes have a positive impact on learning.
- You have successfully introduced a new assessment system following the removal of national curriculum levels. All staff have benefited from collaborative training and external moderation in order to provide accurate assessments of pupils' abilities. You track pupils' achievement carefully and are able to provide summary information for staff and governors which shows the proportion of pupils working at age-related expectations in reading, writing and mathematics, and progress over the year. You also use this information effectively to identify and provide additional support to pupils who are struggling.
- You, your governors and leadership team have a good understanding of the strengths within the school and areas which need further improvement. You acknowledge, however, that the key priorities for the school are not always reflected well enough, or are explicit enough, in the school development plan. For example, this year the summary action plan contained a large number of priorities, but these were not always clearly expanded on or matched to measurable criteria in the main document itself. Additionally, attendance issues did not feature as a priority despite governor minutes showing that they were checking this, because a decline in attendance was emerging.
- Although several governors are new to post, they are well informed and take a proactive approach in their roles. They visit school regularly and talk to pupils to gather first-hand information for themselves. They have a very good understanding of assessment information and how well pupils are achieving. As you will be leaving the school in July to take up another headship, governors have carried out a rigorous recruitment process to appoint your successor. Governors have a clear vision for the future of the school which helped guide them when appointing the new headteacher. Governors fulfil their statutory duties and are clear about their safeguarding and financial responsibilities. They know how the pupil premium and sports funding are spent and the impact this has on pupils' development and well-being. Minutes of governors' meetings show that you review policies regularly and provide governors with comprehensive and clear information.
- Most children join Nursery or the Reception class with skills and knowledge which are typical for their age. They make good progress because all adults provide good-quality support and work well with individuals and groups of children to check on their learning. Exciting activities which develop children's curiosity and imagination feature strongly. For example, during my visit to the Nursery, children showed high levels of engagement in filling different containers in a water tray and pretending to be on a train going to the zoo.

- The proportion of children reaching a good level of development has increased over time and is now above the national average. As a result, they are well prepared for Year 1.
- Teachers cater for the needs of different ability groups well. Boys achieve well but girls do even better. Additional and effective support is provided for pupils who are struggling in reading, writing or mathematics. Interventions are tailored to meet pupils' individual needs and, as a result, all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, achieve well. However, teachers do not always extend the level of challenge presented for pupils, especially the most able, to enable a greater proportion of pupils to exceed age-related expectations. You have recognised that pupils' handwriting could be neater and work in their books could be presented better. You have begun to focus on this when checking pupils' workbooks.
- Teachers and teaching assistants have embraced the new initiatives introduced in phonics (letters and the sounds they make) and mathematics. Phonics teaching has been introduced to children in Nursery so that they begin to learn letter names and sounds earlier and are ready for reading and writing activities in the Reception class. Pupils are taught in ability groups which cater well for their different abilities. In mathematics, all pupils are encouraged to think deeply about mathematical concepts, explain their thinking and apply their knowledge to solve problems. For example, pupils in Year 2 were asked to find a quarter of a number and then use this information to find three quarters of the same number. Visualisation skills are reinforced well. This is leading to increased levels of mathematical understanding.
- You have ensured that pupils' personal development and well-being are promoted strongly. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and work hard in lessons. They have a good understanding of what the school expects of them, including the zone boards in classrooms and 'dojo points' for good work and behaviour. Pupils are polite and respectful and play together well. Older pupils enjoy additional responsibilities such as being prefects or members of the Eco or school council. Pupils have a very good understanding of British values and enjoyed the mock European Union referendum held in school recently.
- Pupils enjoy the wide range of opportunities which the school offers. Before- and after-school care provides valuable support for families and pupils who access it. Pupils take part in a wide range of activities and clubs, including martial arts, dance and multi-sports. This contributes to their physical fitness and enjoyment of sport. Visitors and visits, together with other school events, provide memorable and enjoyable experiences for pupils, such as Year 3 and 4's 'Panto Pandemonium' end of year performance at the local high school. 'Discovery learning' or imaginative topic work develops pupils' knowledge and skills effectively in other curriculum areas, such as history, geography and science.

- The school's assessment information shows that the majority of pupils in all year groups are working at the levels expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics, with a small minority working above these levels. An increasing number of pupils now join the school mid-year or part way through a key stage. For example, four out of 16 pupils have joined the current Year 2 this year and provisional test results for 2016 do not show the good progress that these pupils have made from their starting points. Similarly, in 2015, attainment for Year 2 was below average. This information has to be treated with caution because a third of pupils had significant special educational needs and/or disabilities and were working below the levels expected. Again, they made good progress from their starting points. Results for the Year 1 phonics check are broadly average. The disproportionate effect of small numbers and the fact that pupils join and leave the school at times other than at the beginning and end of the school year are reflected in the published data.
- Although the majority of pupils have average attendance, a small number of pupils do not attend regularly, especially pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Governors are aware of this and support you in sending letters to parents who do not bring their children to school. They are keen to see an improvement in relation to this as they appreciate and understand that absence has a detrimental effect on pupils' progress.
- Parents have very positive views of the school. They say that their children feel safe and are happy at school. They particularly appreciate the efforts and care provided by all staff. As one parent put it, 'the staff are second to none. They are attentive, encouraging and keen to make school a positive and enjoyable experience for my child. I cannot rate the school, its staff or facilities highly enough.'

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- boys attain as well as girls in all key stages so that attainment gaps close
- teachers challenge pupils, especially the most able pupils, so that more reach above age-related expectations
- the school development plan is focused sharply on the main school priorities and leaders evaluate the impact of actions taken during the year
- the attendance of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities improves.

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

Yours sincerely

Heather Simpson
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this one-day inspection, I met with you, all members of your leadership team and several members of the governing body, including the chair of the governing body. I discussed the work of the school with you and carried out some short visits to most classes. I looked at pupils' work and spoke to them about their learning. I also spoke informally to pupils about behaviour and how they learn how to keep themselves safe. I observed pupils' behaviour at lunchtime and in lessons. 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. I took account of the 22 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire Parent View, together with comments made by parents when collecting their children from school. The views of three staff were taken account of through the staff survey. There were no responses to the pupils' online survey to consider.