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Mrs Rose Carberry
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Dear Mrs Rose Carberry

Short inspection of Westlea Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 19 October 2016 with Tonwen Empson HMI, 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 July 2011.

This school continues to be good.

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

- The vision of Westlea Primary School to provide 'a successful learning environment where all children develop as happy and caring individuals with the tolerance, respect and resilience to be the best they can be' shines through the school community.
- Under your leadership, the school has continued to develop and thrive. You are uncompromising in your determination to do the very best for the pupils in your school. You keep a tight focus on the quality of teaching to ensure that teaching meets the needs of pupils, especially those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and the disadvantaged. Consequently, pupils are making effective gains in their learning from low starting points.
- Leaders are united in their high expectations of what pupils can achieve, both academically and socially, given the additional challenges that many pupils experience. You, your staff and governors accurately identify where improvements need to be made and take the necessary actions. For example, you are fully aware that further improvements need to be made to meet the demands of the national curriculum at key stage 2, especially in writing and improving spelling, grammar and punctuation.
- A significant strength of the school is the quality of care, guidance and support provided for your pupils. A strong culture of staff working closely with experts,

and other agencies exists to provide an all-round education, enabling even the most vulnerable pupils to thrive.

- Your school, while remaining a stand-alone academy, is also a member of an 'umbrella trust', The Link Academies Collaborative Trust (LACT), along with three other primary schools in west Swindon. You are making effective use of this partnership as a conduit for ensuring that your pupils receive the best education. Governance is strong. Governors are knowledgeable about the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Clear systems and structures are in place to enable them to carry out their roles effectively. Governors provide a good balance of challenge and support. However, school development plans need to be more precise. Leaders have not written sharply focused development plans. The impact of actions taken to improve the school is not effectively evaluated. Leaders and governors need to clearly identify who is responsible for checking the effectiveness of each development action. Development plans need to state, for each action, who will evaluate and when and how it will be done.
- Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the 'all-round' education their children receive, with the vast majority saying that they would recommend the school. Particularly, parents of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities spoke with delight of the high levels of support the school provides. They welcome the guidance you give, not only to their children, but also for them as parents. This helps their children to make strong progress with their learning and social skills.

Safeguarding is effective.

A strong culture of safeguarding pervades the school. There is a shared understanding of the need to protect pupils against all possible risks. Staff, irrespective of their role, know the pupils extremely well. They remain vigilant, keeping a close eye on every pupil, especially on those whose circumstances make them more vulnerable.

All safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and accurate. Policies and procedures are kept up to date and are resolutely adhered to. For example, staff have recently been briefed on the latest guidance provided by the government. All staff are well trained in all aspects of safeguarding, including child sexual exploitation, female genital mutilation, radicalisation and extremism. This high-quality and comprehensive training enables staff to quickly spot concerns and take rapid action with confidence.

By expanding the number of senior leaders who have been trained as designated safeguarding leads, you ensure that there is always someone on site to manage every safeguarding concern.

You and your governors fully understand how to recruit safely so that all staff are carefully vetted prior to commencing employment. Risk assessments are thorough and regularly monitored by leaders, especially for those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. For example, fire evacuation procedures for pupils in wheelchairs are comprehensive.

You make effective use of other agencies and professional expertise to ensure that your pupils are kept safe. However, you described situations when you feel frustration at social care's slow response to your concerns for the well-being of individual pupils. Nevertheless, you show a ruthless and dogged determination to ensure that you keep your pupils safe.

The pupils that inspectors spoke to during the inspection said they feel safe. They know that staff in school will help and support them if they have any worries or concerns. Pupils describe incidents of bullying as extremely rare; they are confident that when they do occur, swift action is taken by staff to resolve the situation. Pupils have a secure understanding of the importance of keeping safe appropriate to their age and stage of development. For example, pupils told inspectors, 'The school helps us to be safe all around the school and even on the computer.'

Inspection findings

- Evidence scrutinised during the inspection shows pupils are making good progress given their vulnerabilities and complex needs. However, school leaders and governors are aware that achievement and progress continues to fluctuate in reading, writing and mathematics and outcomes remain below the national in these subjects at key stage 2.
- Instrumental to the school's improvement is the drive and relentless focus you and your senior leaders. You make sure that teachers have the highest expectations of what their pupils can achieve, irrespective of their starting points or backgrounds. You hold teachers to account through a robust cycle of performance management which is closely linked to school improvement priorities. Leaders, including governors, have no hesitation in tackling any weak performance of teachers. Consequently, there is some strong practice and teaching is good. For example, older pupils were making great strides in their writing, expressing viewpoints. The use of a high-quality text, coupled with probing questioning by the teacher, resulted in pupils writing with flair and skill, with one pupil commenting, 'This is really making me think.'
- Children start school with skills that are below those expected for their age, particularly in the core skills of reading, writing, number and communication. The number of children achieving a good level of development has risen year on year since 2013. However, leaders were disappointed with the 2016 outcomes. By carefully analysing the information for each child, you have ensured that provision is in place to enable them to quickly catch up in Year 1.
- The standards in the phonics screening check improved significantly in 2016. You are aware that there is more work to be done as the outcomes remain below the national. Nevertheless, you know very clearly what is working well and why, and are confident that this trajectory of improvement will continue.
- Pupils are making good progress with their reading from very varied starting points. They read widely and often, talking with enthusiasm about preferred authors and genres. Parents welcome the guidance you give them in supporting their children's reading at home. Consequently, pupils have acquired a love of reading.
- Differences have rapidly diminished between disadvantaged pupils and other

pupils in the school and nationally, in all subjects. This is as a result of good teaching and learning activities precisely meeting pupils' needs. There remains a small difference in the national test outcomes in mathematics but current progress information shows these are closing to mirror pupils' gains in reading and writing.

- You use your pupil premium funding wisely to provide opportunities to enrich pupils' learning and provide them with wider experiences. For example, a trip to the Houses of Parliament and the opportunity to meet their local member of parliament opened up the world of democracy to pupils. This increased pupils' understanding of how the voting system works.
- Similarly, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are also making good progress. Teachers know their pupils well and consequently plan activities that will effectively meet their individual needs and interests.
- Leaders have identified that the most able pupils are not making the progress of which they are capable, especially in their writing. They are taking swift action to tackle this, for example through using the LACT to share good practice to support staff and carefully check that provision is meeting the needs of the most able pupils.
- Leaders, including governors, are aware of the changes in the demographics of the school. The school has welcomed a significant number of pupils from overseas, the majority of whom are learning English for the first time. They are rapidly developing their early speaking skills, but for some it is still very early days. You have wasted no time in appointing specialist staff to support these pupils in their new learning environment. As a result, pupils are quickly settling, forming positive relationships and enjoying their time in school. This is a strong platform from which pupils can develop a love of learning.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes to their learning and express their desire to do well. They demonstrate resilience and fortitude to overcome challenges and to make good gains in their learning. They told inspectors how much they enjoy coming to school and this is reflected in their regular attendance, which is currently just above the national average. However, attendance figures can fluctuate term by term, especially for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. This is as a result of the complex needs of some pupils, requiring extended stays in hospital.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- effective leadership of teaching continues to be a priority in order to
 - secure accelerated progress for the most able pupils
 - ensure that the teaching of writing meets the increased demands of the national curriculum, especially in grammar, spelling and punctuation
- development plans indicate more precisely how, and by whom, checks will be made to see if the actions taken are improving the learning and progress of pupils.

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

Yours sincerely

Jen Southall
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors observed learning in lessons, some of which were with you. During these observations and at other times inspectors took the opportunity to scrutinise the work in pupils' books. Inspectors talked to pupils and also listened to pupils with a range of abilities reading. Meetings were held with the senior leadership team. We met with a member of the governing body and two headteachers from other schools in the Link Academies Collaborative Trust. A wide range of documentation was looked at, including the school's evaluation of its own performance and information relating to pupils' current achievement and progress. Inspectors also checked the effectiveness of the school's safeguarding arrangements and attendance information. We spoke to parents at the start of the day and also took into account the 32 responses to the Ofsted online survey 'Parent View' and considered additional comments received via text message from parents.

The key lines of enquiry tested during this short inspection day were:

- the effectiveness of leaders and managers in ensuring that the school provides an good standard of education for its pupils, particularly in key stage 1 and key stage 2
- the effectiveness of the teaching of phonics and how this improves pupils' key skills, knowledge and understanding in support of reading and writing
- the effectiveness of leadership in the early years provision in ensuring children get a good start to their education
- how well disadvantaged pupils are performing, especially in mathematics
- how effectively the school keeps pupils safe.