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10 November 2016

Mrs Amanda Copper  
Headteacher  
Wimbish Primary School  
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Dear Mrs Copper

### **Short inspection of Wimbish Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 13 October 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 your school was judged to be good in December 2011.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. Since you became headteacher in September 2015, you have challenged head on poor pupil outcomes and less-than-good teaching. You have successfully strengthened the quality of the leadership team so that pupils' achievement has improved, teaching is securely good and early years provision meets children's needs effectively. Staff, pupils and governors have embraced your clear direction and modelling of high expectations. They mirror your ambitions for the school in their own attitude and work. You have established an effective team who are committed to doing their very best for the pupils at Wimbish Primary School.

Published information about pupils' outcomes suggests that there has been significant underachievement over the past two years, particularly in mathematics. However, this does not accurately reflect the current quality of education that pupils receive, nor the complexities that leaders face in ensuring that pupils achieve well. The school has exceptionally high numbers of pupils who enter and leave midway through the year. For example, of the small cohort of pupils who started with you in Year 6 in 2016, only 20% remained with you until the end of the year. Despite the small cohorts and high turnover of pupils, you refuse to accept excuses for pupils not to achieve their full potential while they are with you.

You ensure that pupils' attainment and interests are assessed accurately when they start with you, and you monitor their progress meticulously. This provides you with detailed information which you use carefully to plan provision that meets pupils' needs well. You are relentless in your determination that all adults understand the importance of this through a holistic approach to enabling all pupils to succeed. While they are with you, pupils make good progress and the information you gather about their achievement is shared so that their next school can help them continue to progress quickly. The few pupils who stay at the school for a greater proportion of their primary education make good and sometimes better progress, from their varied starting points. The provision for all pupils at Wimbish Primary School is good. Pupils have a positive experience no matter how long or short their time with you, and they are well prepared for the next stage in their education.

When you arrived in 2015, you quickly set about improving the quality of teaching and learning, which had declined since the previous inspection. Where there were concerns, you quickly intervened and provided both challenge and support to teachers. You continually check that these improvements are being maintained. Teachers are given clear pointers for how to improve their practice. Your staff team want to do their best for the pupils at Wimbish and so consequently they take on board the advice given and use it to develop their work. Moreover, the increasing success of the school is enabling you and your governors to recruit effective teachers and other staff with the same aspirations and high expectations for all pupils. You now have a dedicated team in place who focus well on improving the attainment of all pupils. As a result, the quality of teaching and learning is typically good.

Since your arrival, you have also re-emphasised the importance of providing a welcoming and interesting learning environment. Displays around the school stimulate pupils' curiosity. Learning is an enjoyable experience for all pupils and takes into account their interests. This results in pupils working hard and with enthusiasm. Pupils have positive attitudes that support their good progress.

You have taken determined, well-focused and successful action to improve pupils' achievement in mathematics. Pupils' books show that they are taught an appropriate range of mathematics content, including reasoning and problem-solving tasks. Work is appropriately presented and it clearly shows the progress pupils are making when applying their knowledge and understanding. This is particularly noteworthy when pupils use various written methods to calculate. There is increasing fluency in numeracy in the books of pupils who benefit from sharply focused mathematics intervention. As a result, pupils' work, both from the previous academic year and currently, shows that they are making good, more rapid progress from their starting points.

You urgently reviewed the way phonics and reading skills were taught across the school. You have made sure that children start to learn phonics sooner than they did in the past so that more pupils reach the expected standard in their learning by the end of Year 1. In 2016, the proportion of pupils who successfully met the expected standard is a significant improvement on the previous year and is now above the national level. Additionally, teachers are teaching any gaps in phonics

knowledge in all key stage 2 classes and making sure that pupils' spelling improves. Expectations about how often pupils read are higher, and pupils are now reading at school and at home routinely. These experiences are instilling a love of reading in pupils and they are more able to read and spell unfamiliar words. All pupils who read to me during the inspection talked about how they enjoy reading. They all used appropriate strategies to help them read and spell tricky words in the books they were reading.

Pupils behave well in class and around the school. Pupils understand the importance of keeping safe while walking around the school site, and do this following the rules sensibly. Pupils are polite, respectful and welcoming towards visitors. They learn to take responsibility through, for example, looking after the school chickens in 'Cluckingham Palace'. Pupils were keen to tell me how they looked after the chickens and why it was important to do this.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Upon your arrival, you reviewed what was in place and rightly implemented more rigorous systems to safeguard pupils. Robust procedures for making staff appointments and carrying out all the required checks on adults who work with the pupils are now well established. This work is overseen effectively both by yourself and the governors. You make sure that staff are properly trained and, so that they know what to do if they have a concern about any pupil, you ensure that they receive regular updates about all aspects of safeguarding. You have reviewed all the forms used to record any safeguarding matters and these provide you with a comprehensive understanding of vulnerable pupils. Staff know about the dangers to pupils from radicalisation and extremism. They are very careful to be vigilant regarding any risks.

Pupils learn how to stay safe through a well-thought-out curriculum and through the effective deployment of specially trained staff who provide support and guidance. For example, the newly appointed learning mentor offers an additional level of personal and pastoral support to families and pupils. You take effective action with other agencies and professionals, when needed, to keep pupils safe. Staff and parents who responded to Ofsted's questionnaires, and to your own school surveys, believe that pupils are safe in school and are cared for well. The views of pupils with whom I spoke, and the responses to the pupils' questionnaire, confirmed this opinion.

On appointment, you immediately set about securing better site safety and supervision. Risk assessments are thorough and are reviewed routinely.

Although 2015 published information would suggest that pupils' attendance at the school is an area of concern, it does not reflect the high mobility of pupils, nor the small numbers in different cohorts. You have taken effective action to ensure that pupils attend school regularly. However, you recognise that there are still some groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, that have absence rates slightly above their classmates. Much successful work has been undertaken with external liaison officers supporting the school. As a result, attendance is improving well.

As a result of your resolute view that safeguarding pupils is a priority, the vigilance you demonstrate and your immediate actions to remedy any potential loopholes, the safeguarding culture at Wimbish Primary School is well understood and embedded to ensure pupils' safety. You have made sure that effective arrangements are in place to safeguard pupils.

### **Inspection findings**

- You have implemented an incisive performance management system, based around high-quality pupil progress meetings which hold staff to account for the progress that pupils make. You have sought external support from the local authority so that staff can share effective practice and check that they assess pupils' work accurately. This gives you confidence in the accuracy of assessment. You use this, alongside a range of information, to challenge teachers to plan specific activities to support any pupil who is at risk of underachieving.
- Children enter the early years with skills and abilities below those typical for children of their age. The early years teacher works successfully to provide various opportunities for children to use their basic skills in a range of activities and to encourage them to be independent. Consequently, the proportion of children who reached a good level of development has significantly improved and, once the information is finalised, looks set to exceed the national average.
- The quality of writing, as evidenced by pupils' work and displays around the school, clearly shows a vast improvement on previous pupils' achievement. Pupils are now taught how to create extended pieces of writing very effectively. There are also more opportunities to practise these writing skills across the curriculum subjects.
- Disadvantaged pupils are making good progress as a result of determined efforts by staff and leaders. Close monitoring of the progress of individual disadvantaged pupils, effective use of assessment and timely support mean that these pupils make good progress. This is particularly the case for the most able disadvantaged pupils because you have utilised some of your pupil premium funding effectively to challenge them. Pupils talk favourably about how this helps them to do better in their learning. One pupil said, 'I like going out for my extra lessons because when I go back into class I can talk about what I know better. My teacher helps me to be able to explain more clearly, especially in maths. I can just do things in my head because it's quicker.'
- The assistant headteacher, who is also the special educational needs coordinator, has effectively reviewed the school's provision for special educational needs and/or disabilities in line with the national changes. As a result, pupils' needs are quickly identified and met through a wide range of high-quality support and they are making better progress. You have identified that the work of learning support assistants, though improving, does not yet consistently ensure that pupils make maximum progress. You are providing training for support staff so that they feel more confident in their roles. You have challenged teachers to be more effective in how they plan the work of learning support assistants.

- Feedback and the guidance that pupils receive have improved since the previous inspection. There is consistency in the approach across the school, although it is adapted well to different age groups. Pupils use the guidance they are given to make good and often rapid improvements in their work.
- As a small school, teachers lead more than one curriculum subject. You rightly acknowledge that leadership of mathematics and English is proving successful and making a difference to the progress pupils make. However, while thorough assessment is embedded in all other subject areas, these leaders have not had time to monitor fully to ensure that they know if pupils' progress in all curriculum subjects is as strong as in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils benefit from a wide range of enrichment activities including Forest Schools and the opportunity to perform at the O2 in the Young Voices event. Pupils value the chances they are given at school because they say it 'helps you be more confident in life'.
- Governors are a conscientious and committed group who provide an effective level of support and challenge to leaders. They know the school well because they receive accurate information from leaders and visit the school frequently to see for themselves the difference leaders' actions make.
- The local authority, from which you have sought advice since your appointment, considers your leadership to be effective and that the changes you have made in this time have brought considerable improvements to the school. The local authority has provided effective support during your headship and has plans in place to continue to work with you to secure further rapid improvement.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teaching continues to accelerate the rate of pupils' progress, particularly in mathematics
- they continue to develop non-core subject leaders, as already identified in your plans, so that these leaders can be fully effective in their monitoring roles at the school, ensuring that pupils progress well across all areas of the curriculum
- learning support assistants are consistently effective in the support that they give to pupils so that they make more of a difference to the progress pupils make.

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

Yours sincerely

Tracy Fielding  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

Throughout the inspection, I particularly focused on key lines of enquiry that were the safety and behaviour of pupils; the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, particularly of mathematics, phonics and writing, including in early years; attendance, including that of vulnerable groups; and the progress and achievement of pupils, including that of disadvantaged pupils and the most able pupils. I also looked at how effectively leaders monitor and manage the school's transient pupil population.

During the inspection, I met with you, the assistant headteacher, who is also the special educational needs coordinator, two representatives of the governing body including the vice-chair, and an improvement adviser from the local authority. You and I visited all of the classes during the day to observe the quality of teaching and learning and look at the pupils' books. I took account of five responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, and looked at the recent school survey of parents', staff's and pupils' views. I met with pupils, including the head girl and boy, joined pupils at lunchtime break and heard some pupils read. I looked at a range of the school's documentation, including current information about pupils' progress and achievement, attendance, safeguarding checks, policies and procedures. I also looked at, and discussed with you, the evaluation of the school's effectiveness and the current improvement plan.