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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
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Mrs Gaynor Rogers
Headteacher
Wood Lane Primary School
Wood Lane
Bignall End
Stoke-on-Trent
Staffordshire
ST7 8PH

Dear Mrs Rogers

Short inspection of Wood Lane Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 1 November 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 February 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. In this small school, you have established a highly effective and collaborative leadership model, involving all staff, yet clearly led by your strategic vision for continuous improvement. Every member of the teaching staff is involved in identifying priorities for school development, each taking appropriate responsibility for ensuring that agreed actions are carried out and monitored for their effectiveness. Consequently, there is a very collegiate approach to ensuring that all pupils achieve the best they can.

You, your teachers and your teaching assistants know your pupils exceptionally well and great care is taken to ensure that barriers to learning are quickly identified, that parents are fully involved in the steps taken to address these and that any additional help required is rapidly put into place. As a result, parents and pupils are confident that the school will provide a broad range of help and support wherever it is needed. Moreover, parents speak with pleasure of the many opportunities they have to share in their children's learning and celebrate their achievements through 'sharing afternoons' and regular pupil performances of their work.

At the last inspection, you were asked to improve mathematics at key stage 1. This has been addressed very effectively. For instance, in 2016, all key stage 1 pupils achieved at least expected standards in mathematics and more than half achieved greater depth.

You were also asked to further develop the ways in which the school records achievement in the early years. Again, this has been addressed successfully. Children in the Nursery and Reception classes are carefully assessed on a very regular basis. They and their parents know what their next steps need to be and you have provided parents with clear advice about how they can help their children at home.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that all members of staff have a very clear understanding of their responsibility to safeguard children so that this aspect is integral to the school's work. All teachers keep records of even minor concerns about a child. The school's referral system ensures that these are followed up carefully where required. As designated safeguarding lead, you ensure that referrals to the local authority are rapid, that you seek advice when required and that you work closely with a range of agencies to keep children safe from harm. Weekly meetings ensure that frequent checks are made on the impact of actions taken and enable you to tailor additional support.

Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe, including when online. They spoke confidently of what the risks were, how they could avoid these, and what to do if they were worried. As a result, pupils are safe and their parents are confident that this is the case.

Pupils are encouraged from an early age to be independent and to take responsibility. For example, even the youngest nursery children are expected to clear away their dinner plates and cutlery, or to help put away classroom resources. Pupils are also helped to develop their understanding of British values. For instance, the school council, and the more recently developed school parliament, help pupils to understand democracy and decision-making on behalf of others.

Pupils and parents say that bullying is very rare. Your own records suggest that this is an accurate view. Pupils told me that although there is occasional name-calling, they are confident that if they tell a teacher it will be stopped immediately. They were keen to tell me that they are rewarded for being kind to each other, as well as for doing good work. Older pupils explained that this was why everyone in the school 'gets along' so well. All pupils spoken to said that they thoroughly enjoyed coming to school because 'learning is fun'.

Inspection findings

- The governing body knows the school very well. They have a range of appropriate skills and experience which ensures that they have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development, and how it compares to other schools nationally. They take a suitably strategic and well-informed role in school improvement because they do not just rely on information provided, but visit the school regularly to see things for themselves. For instance, link governors undertake learning walks, participate in school events and attend school performances. Such activities are recorded and fed back to other governors so that

all members have access to first-hand information about the school's performance, the impact of funding on pupils' learning and parents' views.

- Teaching is of a consistently high quality. As a result, pupils are thoroughly engaged with their learning. Indeed, during this inspection, it was a pleasure to witness pupils in Year 1 and 2, entranced with their introduction to the aurora borealis, as their teacher shared pictures sent in by a grandparent. The same pupils were clearly enthused by their project work, taking great satisfaction in pointing out examples of the animals they had made and placed around the classroom as part of the 'Tin Forest' theme. In all classrooms visited, pupils' engagement and interest in their learning was a common feature, as was the pride they have in their work. However, the quality of handwriting is variable, both within and across year groups, and some pupils struggle to use a clear cursive script. You have recognised this as a priority for improvement and have introduced the teaching of cursive writing from entry to early years, although it is too early to see the impact of this.
- The school has developed an effective assessment system to measure pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Assessment information for current cohorts shows that the vast majority of pupils and groups of pupils, including the most able, disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, are making good progress towards the age-related expectations in these subjects. However, at this point, assessment of other subjects is less informative. You have appropriate plans to address this and to ensure that pupils have a better understanding of how well they are doing and what skills they have mastered or need to work on.
- Teachers have an accurate understanding of where pupils are in reading, writing and mathematics and the next steps required. As a result, planning to meet the needs and aptitudes of pupils is effective and ensures that all pupils are supported to make the progress they should. Challenge activities are carefully planned and used effectively to stretch the most able pupils and they clearly enjoy the opportunities to go further with their learning and to share what they have achieved.
- The school's use of 'learning books' has built a culture of celebrating achievements both within school and with parents. Pupils are able to select the work of which they are most proud throughout the term, to present in their learning books, which are sent home to parents. 'Sharing afternoons' are also opportunities for parents to celebrate many different types of achievement with their children and teachers.
- Many children enter the nursery with skills and understanding below those expected for their age. Historically, this was reflected in the low proportion of children reaching a good level of development by the end of their Reception Year. Consequently, you took the decision to offer full-time nursery places which would be funded by the school. This, in conjunction with the significant improvement made to outdoor learning spaces, has paid great dividends. For instance, the skilled teacher and teaching assistants have been able to assess gaps in understanding, set clear targets and work consistently with children to ensure that they make rapid gains. As a result, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development has moved impressively from 14% in 2013 to 74% in 2016.
- The rapidly improving outcomes over the last three years, noted above, have had

a particularly positive impact on key stage 1, as pupils are increasingly better prepared for this phase. You and the key stage 1 leader have ensured that the approach used in the early years is built upon effectively. For instance, you have established an outdoor area where pupils can continue to learn through play at appropriate times, which helps them to make a successful transition to more formal learning. Consequently, in 2016, the school was well above national averages for reading, writing and mathematics for all pupils and groups of pupils, including the most able and those who are disadvantaged.

- In 2016, provisional results show that progress for pupils by the end of Year 6 was in the top 10% nationally for reading and writing. This year, early indications are that the current year 6 will at least match that outcome, despite lower starting points than is the case nationally. Achievement in mathematics was slightly below national averages last year, particularly for pupils of middle ability. As a result, you have taken action to address identified areas of weakness. For instance, there is now a weekly focus on mental mathematics and the times tables in all year groups. Again, initial assessment information for this year suggests that this is having a positive impact on improving pupils' understanding and their ability to apply these skills to problem-solving.
- Last year, outcomes for grammar, spelling and punctuation were below national averages. This was as a result of a small number of pupils with specific difficulties with spelling. Although similar difficulties are not present in the current year group, you have nonetheless introduced additional resources for spelling to ensure that any difficulties are identified and addressed rapidly further down the school.
- You have created a very effective team to address attendance and persistent absence. As a result, attendance has improved. The school is now in line with national averages for attendance and persistent absence has been reduced significantly as a result of focused work and support for parents. However, you are not complacent and know that further improvements are required for some groups of pupils.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- actions taken to improve handwriting are carefully monitored for their impact on other aspects of writing
- assessment systems for foundation subjects are developed so that pupils have a better understanding of what they are achieving and what they need to do next
- there is a continued focus on improving mathematics at key stage 2, particularly for middle ability 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 Staffordshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Mel Ford
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection I met with you, the assistant headteacher and members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. I also met with class teachers, pupils and parents.

I discussed the work of the school with you, including the processes and procedures in place for safeguarding. I visited all classrooms, speaking with pupils about their learning, and looked at the work they had completed in their books. I listened to a small group of pupils reading and met with a larger group of pupils to gather their views about the school. I took account of information from questionnaires completed by staff and parents.

I scrutinised a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation and plans for development, assessment information for pupils currently in the school, school policies, child protection records, minutes of governors' meetings and records of their in-school activities, and documents about the use and impact of government funding.

During this short inspection I followed four lines of enquiry:

- Have leaders maintained the rising proportion of children achieving a good level of development, so that the school reaches at least national averages?
- How are leaders addressing the lower outcomes in mathematics at the end of key stage 2, particularly for middle-ability pupils?
- Have leaders identified the reasons for the poorer performance in grammar, spelling and punctuation at the end of key stage 2 in 2016? What actions have been taken to tackle this?
- What have leaders done to reduce persistent absence for identified groups of pupils?