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Mrs Angela Hay  
The Winchcombe School  
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Dear Mrs Hay

### **Short inspection of The Winchcombe School**

Following my visit to the school on 9 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 November 2011.

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

You, supported very effectively by other leaders, have maintained the good quality of education since your arrival following the last inspection. You lead with drive and determination to improve outcomes for the pupils at the school. Your collaborative approach to leadership has brought all those who work at the school together to work towards your vision for inclusive, effective provision. Consequently, there is a strong team spirit among staff. They share your high expectations and desire to improve the school continuously.

Provision remains effective. For example, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is consistently high. Effective action has been taken to tackle the areas for improvement identified in the last inspection. Teachers make very good use of assessment information when planning and delivering lessons. For example, in a Year 2 lesson the teacher had adapted her planning in response to assessments to help pupils make better use of expanded noun phrases. In this lesson, the teacher used assessment to amend the task and challenge for pupils of different abilities very effectively.

The teaching of writing has improved. All staff follow the school's clear policies. Pupils write for a range of purposes and audiences. Many state that they enjoy writing and can share where teachers have helped them to accelerate their progress. There is clear evidence to show that pupils are making rapid progress in their writing in key stage 2. However, leaders have rightly identified that boys' writing in key stage 1 needs greater attention.

Pupils enjoy lessons and benefit from excellent relationships with their teachers. Pupils are very clear about what they are doing and why. This helps to ensure that lessons are typically purposeful and pupils show excellent attitudes to learning.

The pupil premium grant is used effectively. There is clear evidence that pupils who are disadvantaged are, on average, making more rapid progress than their non-disadvantaged peers. Teachers know who their disadvantaged pupils are and plan appropriately to make sure that they make rapid progress.

The challenge for the most able pupils at the school is more varied. Teachers make sure that those who need to catch up are supported very effectively. However, they do not always plan with the same care for the most able. You rightly recognise the need to improve this, including for those most-able who are also disadvantaged.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The current leadership structure for safeguarding is highly effective. You act as the designated safeguarding lead, but are supported very well in this role by the family support worker and pastoral lead. Together, you have established an open culture, which is highly valued by staff and families. Parents report unreservedly that they believe their children are safe.

Staff benefit from well-planned and comprehensive safeguarding training. There are clear policies and procedures for staff to follow if they have a concern about a child or receive a disclosure. This ensures that lines of communication are strong and effective. Work with other agencies is well established. You follow up any concerns you might have with tenacity. Record-keeping is excellent.

The school business manager, supported well by other leaders, ensures that safer recruitment processes are very secure. All required checks are carried out and recorded appropriately on a single central register.

Opportunities in the curriculum to develop pupils' self-awareness, such as how to keep themselves safe when on the internet, are very well utilised. Consequently, pupils are very aware of what they need to do to be safe and who to go to if they are concerned.

### **Inspection findings**

- Leadership and management at the school are very well developed. You have made useful changes to the structure of the senior leadership team. This has ensured that very good use is made of the skills of the deputy headteacher and two assistant headteachers. Each person has clear areas of responsibility and uses their time very well to review what is going well and where improvements can be made. As a result, your plans for improvement are targeted, effective and make a difference where it is needed.

- Leaders evaluate the quality of teaching and learning accurately. They use what they know about teachers' strengths and weaknesses to plan tailored training that allows teachers to rapidly improve their own practice, often from very strong starting points. Strong links are made between training, school priorities and performance management. This ensures that all staff are clear about what they are trying to achieve and teaching is continuously improving.
- The curriculum is a key strength of provision. Leaders passionately protect pupils' entitlement to a broad and balanced curriculum. Pupils enjoy the topics that their learning is built around. Opportunities to learn in the environment are very well utilised. Pupils learn about key British values, through learning about different cultures and religions, as well as what it means to have a voice in a democratic process. This helps pupils to understand the importance of community and contribution and so their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted very effectively.
- Governors provide useful and focused support and challenge to leaders. Recent changes to how the governing body carries out its duties have helped to ensure that governors are very clear about the strengths and weaknesses of the school. At times, the information they receive from leaders is so comprehensive that it is difficult for them to ensure that they ask the right questions about the right issues.
- The early years is highly effective. Positive relationships and a thirst for learning permeate through the enabling and highly engaging environment. Teachers know their children exceptionally well. Excellent links with parents help to ensure that assessments are accurate and used to plan a wealth of varied opportunities to help pupils make rapid progress. Consequently, pupils leave the early years very well prepared for key stage 1, reflected in the high proportion of pupils who leave with a good level of development. This continues to be much higher than the national average.
- Provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is good. Both those who access the speech and language centre and the mainstream school benefit from provision that is highly focused on their individual needs. Teachers know pupils well and ensure that they access learning experiences that build on what they can already do to make strong progress. For example, excellent use was made of a number of verbal and non-verbal forms of communication to support a group of pupils improve their understanding of the properties of three-dimensional shapes.
- The speech and language unit is very well led and provides very well for the pupils who access it. Very good links with the in-house speech and language therapists add value to their progress towards their targets. Lessons are purposeful, hands on and very effective because of the specific expertise and skills of the staff that work in this part of the school.
- Pupils show excellent attitudes to learning. They enjoy their lessons because teachers make them interesting and purposeful. Attendance has significantly improved over the last three years and is currently above average.

- Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school. They report that their children enjoy coming to school and believe they make good progress.
- Pupils make good progress at the school. Pupils make strong progress in their reading and a higher proportion than nationally attain the expected level in the Year 1 phonics screening test.
- There has been a steady and sustained improvement in the proportions attaining the expected levels in their key stage 1 and key stage 2 results over the last three years. This has been the result of many pupils from different year groups making rapid progress from their starting points. This was particularly evident in the outcomes achieved in 2015, where high proportions of pupils made better than expected progress.
- Provisional outcomes in 2016 are more varied. For example, pupils did less well in reading and mathematics than they did in writing. However, current progress is more consistent. All current groups of pupils are making at least good progress. This is reflected in pupils' work, where standards are evidently high.
- Support from West Berkshire local authority is proportionate and useful. The school improvement partner knows the school well. Recognising the strength in leadership and management, she has rightly continued to provide 'light touch' support and challenge. Opportunities to moderate their new assessment systems facilitated by the local authority have been well utilised by leaders.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they build on the work already started to improve writing for boys in key stage 1
- teachers challenge the most able more consistently in lessons, including those who are disadvantaged
- they continue to strengthen governance at the school by ensuring that governors have the tools to hold leaders to account for the impact of their actions.

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

Yours sincerely

Matthew Barnes  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

I met with you, the deputy headteacher, both assistant headteachers, two governors, and leaders responsible for safeguarding, the early years and the speech and language unit. I had a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority. I visited a number of lessons, all of which were accompanied by a member of the senior leadership team, to observe teaching and look at work in pupils' books. I observed pupils' behaviour in a range of situations, including lessons, playtime and when moving between lessons. I considered the responses of 51 parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I analysed a range of documentation, including reports provided by the local authority, the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan, information about pupils' progress and safeguarding documentation. For this inspection, I had a particular focus on how effectively leaders had tackled the areas for improvement from the last inspection; the quality of safeguarding arrangements; the progress of disadvantaged pupils, including those who are most-able; the effectiveness of the early years; and how well pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve in the speech and language unit.