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Mrs Larcombe and Mrs Cottrell
Head of School and Executive Headteacher
Wellow School
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Dear Mrs Larcombe and Mrs Cottrell

Short inspection of Wellow 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 July 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. As executive headteacher and head of school, you have an excellent understanding of the varied community you serve and this is reflected in the highly positive feedback from parents. Your strong teamwork and the professional debate you have with each other about what makes learning effective and how it will benefit your pupils is one of the main driving forces behind the school's success.

Since the previous inspection you have maintained the high levels of attainment in English and mathematics. You have ensured that there is an improving focus on the need to make sure that all groups of pupils make good progress, especially in mathematics. You were aware that in the last two years some of the pupils in key stage 2 made less progress in mathematics than expected. You have analysed the reasons for this thoroughly and provided additional training to staff where needed.

You use the resources within the school, federation and family of schools very well to provide high-quality professional development and training for staff.

It was a pleasure to meet and talk to your pupils. They are welcoming and friendly, they enjoy coming to school and support each other well. In lessons they have positive attitudes to their learning and take pride in their work. Pupils told me that behaviour is good and that everyone gets along well with each other.

Leaders and teachers have developed an interesting curriculum that pupils enjoy. Pupils I spoke to, and evidence in books, demonstrate the wide range of activities that are part of the curriculum. There are particular strengths in history, physical education and music. Well planned visits, including five residential trips, ensure that during pupils' time at school they have opportunities to learn from new experiences and develop their independence. The school works hard to ensure that all pupils are able to benefit from these worthwhile experiences.

At the time of your previous inspection you were asked to improve teaching by sharing best practice and increasing the monitoring role of subject leaders. You use capable and experienced teachers well to support those teachers who are newer to their careers. This helps less experienced teachers to develop their practice quickly. You have further developed the role of subject leaders so they regularly and effectively monitor teaching and standards in their subjects and can talk confidently about the strengths and their plans to overcome any weaknesses they have identified.

Governance has strengthened since the previous inspection. Governors have the right skills and knowledge to challenge school leaders to make further improvements. They have reflected on the recommendations of the last inspection and an independent review of governance. Consequently, they have tightened their systems of monitoring so that these are now more rigorous. Governors have clear systems in place to ensure that key issues, such as the progress of disadvantaged pupils, are high on their agenda for discussion and scrutiny.

As we worked together observing lessons during the inspection we agreed that there are some occasions where teachers do not challenge all pupils because they underestimate what they are capable of, particularly in mathematics. On the whole children enter the Reception class at Wellow School with skills and knowledge above those typical of their age. They make good progress during the early years to achieve standards that are above national averages. However, the most able children are not always identified quickly enough in the early years. Furthermore, not all teachers take sufficient account of pupils' previous learning to ensure that all groups of pupils make equally strong progress.

Safeguarding is effective.

You are both designated safeguarding leads in the school. You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that records, especially for the most vulnerable pupils, are detailed and of high quality.

Together with governors, you audit safeguarding procedures regularly and take appropriate action to strengthen practice further where necessary. For example, additional training and support has been given to help staff improve their initial recording of low-level concerns. The checks and records associated with the recruitment of staff and volunteers are rigorous and detailed.

In addition to providing regular statutory training to staff, school leaders encourage

staff to think carefully about the specific potential risks to the children who attend Wellow School. They have dispelled the myth that 'it couldn't happen here' and are particularly vigilant around the vulnerabilities of children associated, for example, with using the internet.

The governor with responsibility for overseeing safeguarding has particular expertise in the area. This enables him to support and challenge leaders to improve practice even further.

The school works well with other schools and agencies, as well as families, to help protect pupils from harm. Key staff receive additional training to help them to support vulnerable families well.

Parents, who are rightly confident that their children are safe at school, and pupils speak highly of the care shown by individual teachers. Pupils told me that they feel confident about speaking to a teacher if anything worries them. They gave an example of when this had happened and how they felt supported.

While there are always adults nearby, some areas of the playground and early years classroom and outside area are not always supervised as well as they could be.

Inspection findings

- Over time, you have focused on improving attainment in mathematics. It is consistently above national averages at the end of key stage 2, including for the relatively few disadvantaged pupils.
- You accurately analysed the weaknesses in progress for some pupils who left the school this summer. You recognised that some of the pupils had weaknesses in their basic calculation skills.
- When we observed learning in mathematics lessons together, we could see consistent strengths in teaching across the school. These included the way teachers and pupils use your agreed systems of assessment and feedback and how this helps pupils to improve their work. The increased use of word problems and the helpful use of suitable practical resources or pictorial representations were also consistently evident.
- From talking to pupils and looking at their books it is clear that pupils, including the most able and disadvantaged, take pride in their work. Most groups are making good progress from their starting points in mathematics this academic year.
- There are some remaining inconsistencies in teaching which means that not all groups make as much progress in lessons as they could. In the lessons we observed together we saw examples where some pupils, including some who are disadvantaged, chose or were given work that was too easy. Teachers do not always move pupils on to more challenging work quickly enough. This is because they do not always take account of pupils' starting points or previous learning when planning work, including for those pupils who find mathematics challenging. Meanwhile, in some classes, only the

most able pupils had opportunities to develop their mathematical reasoning skills.

- You keep a close check on the progress of all pupils and especially those who are disadvantaged. Together with the governing body you ensure that the additional pupil premium funding for disadvantaged pupils is spent wisely. Evidence in books shows that these pupils, including the few who are most able, make good progress from their starting points in a wide range of subjects including writing, science and history.
- Together with governors you understand that while attainment is high overall, progress could be accelerated further given the higher expectations of the new end of key stage assessments.
- The leaders who are responsible for the pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities in the school and federation are very knowledgeable about the individuals they work with and their families. They work very well with other agencies and specialists to ensure that those pupils who are correctly identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress from their starting points. This is because they regularly check the effectiveness of the well-planned interventions and good teaching they receive.
- You have rightly identified in your strategic plan that there is an anomaly around the identification of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils are not taken off of the special educational needs register when interventions are complete and pupils make good progress in line with their peers. Furthermore, some pupils are currently incorrectly identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities because of their very low attendance, even though they make good or better progress when they are in school.
- The few pupils who did not meet the required standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check are developing suitable strategies to sound out and blend words. They enjoy reading and trying to read more challenging texts. However, they do not have the ability to recognise some very common, simple words by sight.
- The most able Year 6 pupils who I heard read were confident and fluent. They are encouraged to read often and from a wide range of genres, which they enjoy. They are developing key skills such as inference and deduction by using an online reading programme. However, they told me that they do not receive regular advice from their teachers on how to improve their reading.
- You rigorously track absence and punctuality and take follow-up action where required. As a result, attendance is improving. Your detailed analysis shows that attendance is above the national average when pupils who are regularly absent from school for long periods of time, as part of their culture, are removed from school figures.
- The local authority provides the school with light-touch support. They agree that the school is good, and recognise the many strengths in leadership within the school, federation and family of schools.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils, including the most able and those who are disadvantaged, make consistently good progress in mathematics lessons by ensuring that work is always challenging and allows them to develop their problem-solving and reasoning skills
- teachers use all the information available to them to plan learning that builds on what pupils can already do, and raise the expectations for all groups of pupils
- the special educational needs register is updated to ensure that it accurately reflects the current needs 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 Hampshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Lee Selby
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection I met with you both, a group of governors (including the chair of the governing body), the leader responsible for mathematics and the leaders with responsibility for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. I looked at documentation relating to recruitment checks on staff and talked to staff and pupils about safeguarding. Together, we visited mathematics lessons throughout the school, talked to pupils about their learning in mathematics and looked at their work. We briefly visited the Reception class to confirm the children's level of attainment on entry to the school. I worked with you both to scrutinise documentation about the progress of disadvantaged pupils and looked at their books to see their learning and progress in a range of subjects. I carefully considered the analysis of attendance information that you presented. I heard some pupils from Year 2 and Year 6 read, including some that were most able. I spoke to a number of parents at the start of the school day and considered 49 responses to the online Parent View survey. I held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority.

Throughout the inspection, my main areas of focus were teaching and learning in mathematics, progress of disadvantaged pupils, the identification of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and the school's work to promote good attendance and keep pupils safe from harm.