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23 January 2017

Mr Nick Templeton
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Dear Mr Templeton

Short inspection of Westley Middle School

Following my visit to the school on 13 December 2016 with Vivien Corrie-Wing, Ofsted Inspector, 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 June 2013.

This school continues to be good.

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

Your school is a happy community where pupils are encouraged to excel academically and in a range of sporting and cultural activities. It was great to hear and see the orchestra practising for the Christmas concert.

Published key stage 2 results suggest that the progress that pupils make is not as good as it should be. However, this information does not take into account pupils' starting points when they join the school in Year 5. Baseline tests that pupils undertake when they join the school, and school information for each year group, show that by the time pupils reach Year 8, they have made good and often very good progress in their time at Westley Middle School. To confirm this, we spoke to the lead headteacher in the trust, who endorsed the well-above-average GCSE results that Westley pupils achieve in the upper school. Pupils and parents are very positive about the progress made. For example, a parent told us: 'Westley Middle School is a nurturing and friendly learning environment providing high-quality teaching. The extracurricular activities and trips the school organise are fantastic and have contributed to my children's learning and love for this school'. Another representative comment was: 'My son has been at Westley since September 2016 and the very positive changes in him as a person and his attitude to school and learning have amazed me. Staff are supportive, committed and friendly. Discipline and encouragement for children to be independent in life and learning are strong. A very happy Mummy!'

You know that, although overall standards have been improving, some pupils did not achieve well enough last year by the end of Year 6. This was especially the case in mathematics. The school's monitoring information suggests that current Year 6 pupils are making better progress and are likely to achieve in line with the national average this year. We were particularly reassured about this through our discussions with subject leaders, who could clearly demonstrate how interventions are having a measureable and marked impact on pupils' achievement.

Safeguarding is effective.

The culture of your school is one where pupils respect staff and get on really well with each other. Pupils feel safe. They demonstrate a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe, including when they are online. Staff training is regular and frequent. Pupils are clear that bullying is extremely rare and that, were it to occur, it would be dealt with quickly and effectively.

Referrals to the local authority demonstrate effective partnership working to support vulnerable pupils. Parents referred to the excellent pastoral care which responds to pupils' individual circumstances. Children in the care of the local authority are well supported and make good progress. All statutory requirements are met.

Inspection findings

- Governors have an astute understanding of the school's performance information and have used it to challenge leaders and set performance management goals.
- During the inspection, behaviour in lessons and around the school at lunchtime and breaktime was excellent. However, the number of short-term exclusions is above average.
- Pupils in key stage 3 achieve very well. Work seen in lessons, and the work scrutinised during the inspection, indicates that most pupils make very good progress across a wide range of subjects. By Year 8, standards in top sets are high. This is due to the effective teaching that the pupils receive. Pupils develop the skills and knowledge necessary to give them a flying start towards the well-above-average outcomes they achieve in the upper school.
- At key stage 2, the school is working effectively to ensure that pupils do better in the national tests. The school's monitoring information shows that in Years 5 and 6, pupils make progress from their starting points that is in line with the national average. This is equally true of disadvantaged pupils who, by the time they complete Year 11 in the upper school, attain results that are above the national average for all pupils. The headteacher of the upper school is very clear that the progress enabling these strong results at Year 11 begins in Westley Middle School.
- Pupils are taught reading well. Pupils use their knowledge of phonics effectively to read and spell. Inspectors observed a small intervention providing extra reading support for three pupils. The teacher skilfully used pupils' own knowledge of words to teach them the meaning of prefixes. She then reinforced and

checked their knowledge and understanding, intervening when they needed further support. Inspectors also listened to younger pupils reading to older pupils. Pupils value these additional opportunities to have somebody to listen to them, especially where reading is not encouraged at home.

- The school has recognised the need to improve mathematics at key stage 2. Until recently, this has been hampered by difficulties in recruiting specialist staff. The school has now resolved this issue and the teaching of mathematics has improved as a result. New subject leadership in mathematics is having a positive impact on raising standards. A review of pupils' books demonstrated that there were high levels of productivity and challenge. For example, learning about probability.
- The school benefits from being part of the Bury St Edmunds All-Through Trust. Staff training is provided by the trust. For example, staff in the middle school have been trained about recent changes to GCSE examinations so that they can start to prepare pupils in key stage 3. The trust has introduced an effective system for monitoring pupil progress. Leaders are clear about the progress of individual pupils, but more incisive strategic use of information would enable leaders to have a sharper grasp of patterns of achievement, such as the performance of specific groups of pupils.
- Inspectors found that the quality of teaching was consistently strong across the school. Pupils enjoy a wide range of subjects and were positive about the teaching in all of them. A typical comment from a parent describing high-quality teaching across the school was: 'My daughter has enjoyed the last three years at this school and has improved in so much over these years! The sports, music, arts, science, language departments ... inspire children to learn'.
- Pupils were particularly positive about the 'creative Friday' afternoon sessions. This innovation is a direct response to the previous inspection report, helping the school to maintain a broad, balanced and stimulating curriculum.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- the strategic overview of pupils' progress is improved to enable leaders to more quickly identify patterns in pupils' achievement and accelerate progress further, particularly in key stage 2.

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

Yours sincerely

Adrian Lyons
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

The inspection was carried out on one day and involved one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Ofsted Inspector. They scrutinised the record of checks carried out to ensure staff are suitable to work with children and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection. Inspectors held meetings with school leaders, the chair and vice-chair of the governing body, the lead headteacher for the multi-academy trust, middle leaders, staff and groups of pupils from Years 6 and 8. Inspectors spoke to pupils informally and observed them in classes and around the school at lesson change time and during breaks. Inspectors considered the 76 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.

Inspectors, in agreement with school leaders, focused on specific aspects of the school's work. These related to any differences between pupils' progress in each key stage, how effectively the school teaches pupils to read and to make progress in mathematics. They also focused on how well leaders ensure that the quality of teaching is consistently strong across all year groups and considered the impact of the school's membership of the multi-academy trust.