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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
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Christopher Hobson
Headteacher
Whybridge Junior School
Blacksmith's Lane
Rainham
Essex
RM13 7AH

Dear Mr Hobson

Short inspection of Whybridge Junior School

Following my visit to the school on 11 January 2017, 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 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. The school has faced significant challenges in recruiting and keeping high-quality staff. However, your attention to detail and focus on enabling all pupils to realise their potential has meant that the school has improved since the last inspection. All the identified areas for improvement have been dealt with successfully.

You and your senior team provide strong leadership. Each member of the team has a detailed understanding of their areas of responsibility and lead on these most successfully. The clear procedures for sharing information and ideas across the team mean that senior leaders have a clear grasp of how their work contributes to the overall direction of the school. This is facilitated by the skilful way in which you delegate responsibilities and tasks but maintain a detailed overview of the school as a whole. As a result, you and your team have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development and take decisive action to improve pupils' outcomes.

Your leadership inspires confidence and is instrumental in maintaining teachers' motivation and helping them to develop their expertise, especially in the light of staffing challenges. Middle leaders are clear about the part they play in developing teachers' practice and supporting improvement. For example, they use video recordings of their lessons to work with others on how to improve their teaching. They also help to raise standards by developing the curriculum or planning new

units of work. As a result, they make a strong contribution to the school's continuing improvement.

Pupils' achievements by the end of Year 6 are strong, especially in reading and mathematics, where their progress is impressive. This is true for the most able pupils, disadvantaged pupils and the most able disadvantaged. Achievement in writing is not as good but leaders are taking effective action to raise standards so that they are similar to those in reading and mathematics. This is having the desired impact and the work I saw in lessons, and in books, shows that pupils are developing their writing skills well. The school's own assessment information suggests that writing remains less strong than reading and mathematics but is improving. As a result, the differences between the subjects are less pronounced.

Attendance continues to improve year-on-year and is close to the average. This is because there are effective systems for identifying patterns and following up poor attendance quickly. The school works closely with parents to help improve individual attendance and provides a wide range of support for pupils. For example, the learning mentor and family support worker, who are shared with other local schools, make a clear impact on pupils' well-being and attendance.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. You, your senior leaders and governors rightly give significant emphasis to safeguarding. Your commitment to enabling pupils to do their very best, regardless of their circumstances, means that their well-being and care is of a high quality. Training is thorough. Staff have a clear understanding of the types of abuse and what to look out for in pupils' behaviour. They know to whom to refer their concerns and how to deal with any issues that arise. Governors are mindful of their responsibilities. Impressive record-keeping ensures that concerns are followed up effectively with outside agencies so that pupils get the support they need. The opportunities for pupils to fall between the gaps are minimised by the rigour of the procedures.

Those pupils I spoke with were unanimous that they feel safe in school. They were clear that they are taught about keeping themselves safe outside of school through assemblies, lessons and events such as safeguarding week. For example, pupils noted that they had learned about gangs and the dangers of drugs in assemblies. They also said that internet safety was a regular topic in lessons. Consequently, pupils understand about keeping themselves safe, including about internet safety and 'stranger danger'. They know who to turn to for advice if they have a problem.

Inspection findings

- Leaders and governors provide strong leadership. The school has experienced significant challenges in relation to recruiting and retaining good-quality staff. However, it has faced these challenges head on and leaders have taken difficult decisions to improve teaching quality. For example, the school identified that

staffing difficulties in last year's Year 4 class meant that pupils were underachieving. As a result, leaders have recruited new teachers and ensured that pupils, now in Year 5, are enabled to make up for lost time. Evidence from pupils' books and observations of learning indicate clearly that Year 5 pupils are improving their knowledge and skills and deepening their understanding.

- Pupils respond very positively to teachers' high expectations and carefully planned and executed lessons. In all classes, pupils tackle their tasks enthusiastically and persevere even when the work is difficult. For example, Year 5 pupils were given especially challenging mathematical problems to solve but rose to the challenge readily.
- Assessment information is both reliable and accurate, and used effectively to plan learning. In all classes, pupils are set work that is matched to their needs and starting points. As a result, all pupils, including the most able pupils, disadvantaged pupils and the most able disadvantaged pupils, make swift progress with their learning.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and have an education, health and care (EHC) plan are supported well. Senior leaders are rigorous in ensuring that pupils' needs are assessed carefully by external agencies. They follow up issues effectively to ensure that appropriate support is provided in a timely manner. As a result, these pupils make real progress, especially with their social and emotional skills, and are prepared well for the next stage of their lives. However, leaders recognise that the progress of those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities but do not have an EHC plan is less good.
- The proportion of boys reaching the higher standards in the 2016 tests was less than girls. However, leaders are tackling this issue effectively. For example, leaders' approach to improving teaching quality, based on a detailed understanding of strengths and areas for improvement, is having a positive impact. Similarly, the continuing work to improve outcomes in writing and provide more tasks that interest and engage boys is paying off. While there is still some work to do, the differences between the performance of boys and girls' performance is diminishing rapidly.
- Pupils behave very well in lessons and around the school. This is because teachers and teaching assistants have high expectations and are skilled in managing any silliness. As a result, lessons are rarely interrupted by low-level chatting or impolite behaviour. Pupils are clear about the school's 'behaviour scheme' and can describe in detail how it works. They are also clear that bullying is rare. Pupils say that the 'peer mentors' make a significant difference and the deputy headteacher 'doesn't allow bullying to happen'.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- work to improve teaching and learning continues, especially in writing, so that all staff have the same high expectations of what pupils are able to achieve.

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

Yours sincerely

Brian Oppenheim
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

The inspector agreed to prioritise the following areas with the school at the start of the inspection:

- the progress and attainment of different groups of pupils in writing compared to reading and mathematics
- the attendance of disadvantaged and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities
- the progress made by boys compared with the progress made by girls in relation to achieving the higher levels
- staff understanding of the guidelines for safeguarding and how they follow up concerns, and governor's awareness of their key responsibilities.

During the inspection, the inspector carried out the following activities:

- met with the headteacher, and senior and middle leaders
- held a meeting with three members of the governing body
- spoke with a small group of parents
- met with a group of pupils to seek their views of the school
- listened to a group of pupils reading
- reviewed a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans, and information about pupils' progress, the governing body and pupils' attendance. The school's single central record, pre-employment checks and safeguarding procedures were also reviewed
- scrutinised the school's website and confirmed that it meets requirements on the publication of specified information
- considered 16 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and the school's survey of parents' views
- visited lessons in all classes with the headteacher.