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Ms Victoria Cousins
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Dear Ms Cousins

Short inspection of Wessington Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 9 February 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 January 2013.

This school continues to be good.

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

All of the parents spoken to during the inspection, and all but one who left comments on Parent View, were full of praise for your school. Time and again they told me how much their children enjoy school, how approachable you and the staff are and how well the children behave. As one parent wrote, 'Wessington Primary School is like an extended family where every child is accepted and valued as an individual.'

You deserve much of the credit for ensuring that the school continues to serve its community so effectively. Since the previous inspection, you have balanced successfully the demands of regularly teaching a class as well as those of leading the school. Both governors and parents appreciate your commitment to ensuring that nothing but high-quality teaching is good enough for the pupils. This unwavering ambition has characterised your leadership and ensured that the school continues to improve.

Since the previous inspection, you have focused your school improvement activities on accelerating pupils' progress in key stage 2 and improving standards in phonics, spelling and mathematics. All of the goals you set for improvement in these areas have been met. Pupils throughout the school make at least good progress from

their starting points. They leave the school at the end of Year 6 with skills in reading, writing and mathematics above those found nationally.

However, your school's successes are not limited to good academic outcomes. Letters to you following a residential visit by pupils in Years 2 and 3 noted the pupils' 'lovely manners' and how the children 'looked after each other so caringly'. Similarly, a parent of a child who has special educational needs and/or disabilities described Wessington Primary as, 'a fantastic school...I can't imagine a better place for my child to be'.

The previous inspection noted that pupils did not achieve as well in writing as they did in reading and mathematics. This is no longer the case. In the 2016 assessments, standards in writing were above average at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Indeed, all Year 6 pupils achieved at least the expected standard in writing and in the English grammar, punctuation and spelling test. These outcomes show the positive impact of the actions you took to improve the quality of teaching. Teachers now provide clear guidance to pupils on how they can improve their writing and, crucially, pupils respond to this guidance to master skills they find challenging.

The previous inspection also judged that pupils sometimes received work that was too easy or too hard for them. You addressed this weakness by providing training and support that helped teachers to plan activities that meet the needs of all ability groups. These plans draw upon the accurate information you gather to check how well pupils are doing and to identify where there are gaps in each pupil's learning.

There remain aspects of provision to be improved. One of these is reading. Teachers and other staff do not hear the weaker readers read frequently enough. This means that some pupils who are not reading with the skills expected for their ages, are not catching up with their peers. The most able readers do not receive sufficient encouragement from teachers to experience a wide range of challenging texts. This limits the likelihood of these pupils becoming avid readers and so developing even higher reading skills.

The curriculum provides pupils with a good understanding of many of the characteristics of British life. However, discussions with the pupils showed that they have quite a narrow understanding of what is meant by the term 'British values' and concepts such as democracy.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. All staff and governors have received the latest guidance on how to keep children safe in education. Staff know precisely what to do if they have any concerns about pupils. Appropriate records are kept of any issues that arise, the actions taken and the impact of these actions.

You, as the designated safeguarding leader, work effectively with parents and local agencies to ensure that issues the school reports are thoroughly investigated and satisfactorily addressed. When you feel that agencies or individuals are not responding promptly to requests for support, you do not shy away from challenging their practice.

The school places particular emphasis on promoting good emotional health and well-being. In addition to ensuring that pupils are kind and respectful to each other, staff keep a watchful eye for any signs of low self-esteem or anxiety. Where any issues are identified, pupils benefit from effective support.

Pupils confirmed that they receive helpful guidance from experts on matters such as healthy lifestyles, road safety, ChildLine and the potential risks to their well-being when they are online. Pupils trust and respect the adults who work in the school. They readily seek help with any issues at school or at home that are upsetting them.

Inspection findings

- Assessments of pupils in Year 2 in 2016 showed that the most able pupils did not make good progress in reading or mathematics. For example, in mathematics, no pupils attained the highest standard. In response to these outcomes, you ensured that staff improved their understanding of the skills pupils need to master in order to achieve the highest standard. In addition, you provided training that helped teachers plan suitably challenging activities for the most able pupils. These actions have been successful. The most able pupils, in Years 1 and 2, are now on track to attain high standards in both reading and mathematics.
- In the past, performance information about girls' progress indicated that they did not do as well in mathematics as in other subjects. Girls are now making the same progress in mathematics as they do in reading and writing. They benefit from the care teachers take to check each pupil's work and progress. Teachers set tasks in mathematics lessons that are just right for the range of ages and abilities within each class. This helps all groups of pupils to make good progress.
- Pupils' scores in the Year 1 phonics screening check have improved year on year since the previous inspection. Teachers have benefited from helpful training on how to teach phonics effectively. They have worked together, including videoing one another's practice, to improve the quality of their teaching. In addition, you have changed the way phonics teaching is organised. Pupils are now taught phonics in small groups, based upon ability. Together, these actions have led to pupils attaining standards above the national average.
- Pupils' behaviour and attendance rates remain real strengths of the school. Attendance is above average and no pupils are persistently absent. Attitudes to learning and behaviour throughout the school day are exemplary. Older pupils act as buddies to younger children and pupils contribute well to the running of the school as buddies and school councillors.

- The curriculum in the early years meets successfully the needs of the children in the mixed-age class. Interesting and suitably challenging activities fire the children's imaginations both inside and outside the classroom. Staff work closely with parents to plan activities that match, where possible, the individual interests of children. Parents have good opportunities to check how well their children are learning. The records of their child's progress can be accessed at home and so parents are able to add information or comments for staff to take into account.
- Teaching for pupils in key stages 1 and 2 also ensures that all of the pupils in the mixed-age classes make good progress. In a mathematics lesson visited, for example, the teacher very effectively provided different levels of challenge for pupils on the topic of fractions. It was particularly noticeable how the most able pupils enjoyed tackling a tricky problem of finding two-thirds of the area of a triangle.
- In lessons across the curriculum, pupils have opportunities to show initiative. These opportunities help ensure that older and the most able pupils are not doing work that is too easy for them. Effective use is made of digital technologies to enable pupils to conduct their own research, for example, in history and geography lessons. When pupils do tackle the same activity, the quality of learning is still good. For example, pencil drawings from all classes show very effectively how pupils' skills develop as they move through the school.
- The school uses its pupil premium funding very effectively. It tracks the additional support provided for each disadvantaged child and the impact upon that child's learning. Disadvantaged pupils achieve just as well as other pupils.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils who are struggling to read fluently are heard reading more frequently so that they gain rapidly the skills necessary to become successful learners
- the most able pupils receive guidance from staff that will lead them to read a wider range of books and so further develop their reading skills
- the curriculum ensures that pupils appreciate more fully what is meant by British values.

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

Yours sincerely

Anthony O'Malley

Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you to discuss the school's effectiveness. I also met with other staff, five governors and spoke to a representative of the local authority. I met with a group of pupils and talked with others around the school and during lessons. I observed teaching and learning in all classes and heard pupils read. I looked at work in pupils' books in all subjects, giving particularly close attention to the quality of their written work.

I examined documents, including those linked to keeping the pupils safe, the school's self-evaluation document and the school improvement plan. I considered 17 responses to Parent View, together with the views of parents, gathered as they brought their children to school. In addition, I took account of the views of five members of staff provided through their questionnaire.