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Ms Humma Ahmed  
Headteacher  
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Dear Ms Ahmed

### **Short inspection of Walverden Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 23 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 April 2013.

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

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

You are highly ambitious for the pupils at your school. You have worked successfully since you were appointed as headteacher to improve outcomes for your pupils. Your ambition is shared by staff, governors and parents. You have made sure that the quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection so that your pupils are making better progress now, at every stage across the school.

You are developing a strong leadership team. Recently appointed senior and middle leaders are helping you to make the improvements needed across the school. Staff talk enthusiastically of the positive difference the leadership team is making. Staff appreciate senior leaders' willingness to listen to and act on their suggestions. You have made sure that teachers, particularly those at the early stages of their career, have the help they need to become highly effective in the classroom. Consequently, you have the support and respect of a capable and motivated team that shares your vision.

Your pupils enjoy coming to school. They are polite and respectful towards adults and each other. In lessons, pupils listen carefully to their teachers, take pride in their work and help their classmates. Your teachers and support staff have worked effectively to create bright, attractive classroom environments. Teachers make sure that the classroom walls are filled with hints and tips to help pupils with their work.

Pupils are proud of their work, which is displayed around school.

You and your colleagues understand the needs of your pupils very well. The deputy headteacher and subject leaders have worked hard to refine and improve your curriculum. They have made sure that the curriculum takes account of the interests, aptitudes and needs of your pupils. The subject leaders provide high-quality support to their colleagues. This support is helping to increase teachers' confidence and expertise in teaching a range of different subjects. As a result, your pupils gain a good understanding of the world they live in and develop a passion for learning.

At the previous inspection, the inspector asked you to make sure that all teaching is at least good in order to raise pupils' achievement further. You have made good use of support from the local authority, as well as other training providers, to help your teachers make the improvements needed. However, you have not been afraid to take decisive action when teachers have not met the high standards you expect.

You have developed an effective system to assess and track pupils' progress. You use this information well to identify and address areas of underperformance. You are encouraging your teachers to make greater use of ongoing assessment. This approach is helping teachers to make sure that their lesson planning is more carefully tailored to pupils' specific needs. Staff talked with me about how in mathematics this approach is accelerating pupils' progress.

You make sure that pupils have a wealth of opportunities to write at length across the curriculum. Pupils across the school make good progress from their different starting points. You have made sure that pupils have more opportunities to develop their speaking skills. For example, you have improved both the indoor and outdoor learning environments for your early years children so that children spend more time talking to each other as well as to adults. You have also established a more structured approach to developing children's language skills. As a result, more children are achieving the expected standard in communication and language by the end of Reception Year.

Senior leaders and governors are justifiably proud of the improvements they have made since the previous inspection. However, you are not complacent. You know that there is still more work to be done if pupils are to reach the standards of which they are capable in reading. Moreover, although the recently appointed governors are already providing strong support to you, it is early days. Governors realise that they must deepen their understanding of the school's performance if you are to achieve the ambitious vision for the school.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Your pastoral team is a strength of the school. It has developed a wealth of partnerships with external agencies to provide both pupils and their families with the support they need. The pastoral team is confident to seek advice and guidance from other professionals. It works closely with colleagues across the school to make sure that pupils are safe and cared for well.

The safeguarding team has a good understanding of the most pressing issues in the local community. Staff attend regular training to make sure that they understand their roles and responsibilities in regard to child protection. Leaders have established robust systems and procedures and ensure that record keeping is meticulous. The school carries out thorough checks to make sure that all new staff are suitable to work with children. Teachers ensure that pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe. Parents and pupils are confident that pupils are safe and cared for well.

### **Inspection findings**

- You and your colleagues have worked successfully since the last inspection to secure long-term, sustainable improvements in reading across the school. You have left no stone unturned to find the keys to success in reading for your pupils. You have implemented a systematic approach to teaching pupils phonics skills. This means that more of your pupils are reaching the expected standard in phonics by the end of Year 1. You have made sure that pupils have a wealth of opportunities to practise reading across the curriculum, in addition to their daily, focused reading lessons. You have, quite rightly, recognised the importance of further developing pupils' vocabulary so they can make better sense of what they read. Your own records show that current pupils are making stronger progress in reading. However, achievement in reading still requires further improvement if pupils are to reach the higher standards, which you rightly recognise pupils are capable of.
- You make good use of the additional funding you receive for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. You make good use of the detailed assessment information, gathered by your teachers, to plan and review interventions for those pupils who are falling behind or need to catch up quickly. You told me how you have worked closely with the local authority to refine and improve your systems and procedures for identifying and supporting pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Parents have noticed the improvements you have made, such as the earlier identification of pupils' needs. You have improved your system for measuring pupils' progress to include smaller steps for those pupils who have cognition and learning needs.
- Governors have identified the need to make some changes to ensure that they have the right balance of skills, experience and expertise. Governors have not had a deep enough understanding of the school's performance that has enabled them to provide highly effective support to the headteacher. However, recently appointed governors have already made a positive difference to the effectiveness of the governing body meetings. These new governors are making good use of the information they have about the school's performance to ask insightful questions of senior leaders. Governors acknowledge that they could make more precise use of the published assessment information available to help them. Governors have already sought additional support and training from the local authority to further improve their effectiveness.
- You make good use of the additional funding for physical education and sport.

Pupils take part in a wealth of sporting events locally, including climbing, cricket and rugby. Pupils are proud to represent their school in competitions, including for tri-golf and mini-tennis. The school was delighted to win the local kwik-cricket competition. Pupils told the inspector about how much they enjoy the physical education lessons taught by your higher-level teaching assistant.

- Parents appreciate the warm welcome you and your staff give them and their children each morning. You have placed great importance on improving parental engagement at Walverden. You make sure that there are plenty of opportunities for parents to find out about how they can support their child. At the beginning of the year, you invited parents to meet their child's class teacher. You have held play and learn sessions, mathematics workshops and reading cafés. Parents find staff approachable and value the information they receive about their children's progress.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- governors continue to make good use of advice and support to further develop and enhance their skills and expertise, so they carry out their duties efficiently and effectively
- that they further improve the teaching of reading, so more pupils across the school achieve at least the expected standard.

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

Yours sincerely

Pippa Jackson Maitland  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

**Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with you, senior teachers, and teaching and support staff. An inspector met with two members of the governing body, including the chair. I also spoke with a representative of the local authority. Only two parents responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and so I also considered the school's own recent survey of parents, as well as speaking to some parents by telephone and in person in order to gain a wider understanding of parents' views. I met formally with a group of staff and considered the 18 responses to Ofsted's online survey of staff. I spoke formally with a group of pupils, as well as informally in lessons. Together, we visited classrooms to observe pupils' learning and hear some pupils read. We looked at information about pupils' progress and attainment and the school's self-evaluation and action plans. I conducted a full review of safeguarding, including an evaluation of the school's procedures and policies to keep pupils safe, training records, recruitment checks and record keeping.