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Mr Ian Kearns
Interim Headteacher
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Dear Mr Kearns

Short inspection of Wells Hall Community Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 31 January 2017 with Susan Aykin HMI, 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 May 2012.

This school continues to be good.

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

You have been the interim headteacher since 1 January 2017. You have quickly established a coherent team and a culture of mutual respect. You have inherited an improving school with an enthusiastic and very-able staff who are receptive to new ideas. The Ofsted staff survey revealed a staff that is exceptionally positive about the school and your leadership. Parents agree. A typical comment was: 'Fantastic and engaging teaching staff. My daughter is so keen to learn and loves going in to school...a wonderful school.'

Your own experience of school improvement is accelerating the pace of improvement. There are routines and systems in place to ensure the smooth day-to-day running of the school. The curriculum is broad and balanced, with lots of opportunity for sport, music and trips. For example, on the day of the inspection, Year 1 pupils were visiting the local supermarket to learn about food.

A clear feature of your school is the friendly and welcoming atmosphere. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school. An example of their comments is: 'Really pleased with how happy and keen to learn my daughter is at this school. She is well cared for and given interesting learning opportunities every day.' Others made positive comments about the individual care given for pupils who have

special needs and/or disabilities. The effective start that we saw pupils getting in the early years foundation stage was summed up by a parent telling us, 'My son is in Reception and he enjoys it so much. He feels the teachers do all of the work and he just plays, but he is learning so much and has made really good reading/writing and maths progress.'

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding is effective. The school has robust systems to ensure that pupils are protected. Leaders with responsibility for safeguarding are tenacious in pursuing the most effective options for pupils' emotional and physical well-being. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe and how to access help if they have any concerns. For example, the inspector observed Year 2 pupils discussing with their teacher that they would tell their parent or teacher if anything was concerning them. Nearly all parents responding to Parent View (Ofsted's online questionnaire) are confident that their children are safe at school. Almost all also believe that their child is well looked after. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality.

Inspection findings

- In order to confirm that the school remains good, I identified some key lines of enquiry. One of these was about the progress of pupils currently in the school, including the disadvantaged pupils. Since the previous inspection, as part of the local reorganisation, the school has introduced pupils at Years 5 and 6. As a result, teachers had to increase their awareness of expectations in Year 6 national tests. Leaders and governors recognise that this did not happen quickly enough. Consequently, while pupils' attainment in 2016 key stage 1 and in the early years foundation stage was at least in line with the national average, overall attainment in Year 6 national tests was well below the national average. Disadvantaged pupils attained much less well than their peers. Most pupils made at least average progress in writing between the end of key stages 1 and 2, but progress in reading and in mathematics was significantly below average.
- The situation for current pupils has been transformed. Leaders have forensically examined pupils' weaknesses on a question-by-question basis from last summer's results. Resulting from this is a relentless focus by all teachers throughout the school on addressing the weaknesses identified. Pupils get off to a good start in the early years foundation stage. Evidence in books demonstrates that older pupils now acquire new knowledge and skills very well as they go through the school. Teachers are adept at identifying and plugging gaps in learning. Lessons are engaging. Pupils told inspectors that they learn well because 'lessons are fun'. Teachers' assessment and feedback are generally helping pupils to improve, but the school's policy is not applied fully by everyone. Pupils were enthusiastic about the approach, explaining to inspectors how the policy helps them to make progress.
- The school's assessment information shows disadvantaged pupils to be catching up with other pupils nationally. The school focuses on developing the vocabulary

of pupils as well as providing a range of high quality interventions.

- I looked closely at reading as another key line of enquiry. The teaching of phonics is systematic and effective. Pupils in Reception and key stage 1 learn to read quickly through regular and intensive phonics lessons. Pupils enjoy the challenge of matching letters to sounds and progress quickly to reading fluently. Leaders and teachers have focused on the importance of developing pupils' understanding of texts. Teachers in all year groups read carefully selected texts such as 'The Hobbit' and 'Skellig' at the end of every day. As a result, pupils develop their love of reading and extend their understanding of how writers use language.
- The third line of enquiry was about pupils' behaviour. Behaviour around the school is good. Pupils get on very well together at break and lunchtime. Pupils work well together. They are keen for each other to succeed, as was evident in assembly. The smaller classes in Year 6 has helped to improve behaviour so that low-level disruption is rare.
- Finally, I looked closely at the school's capacity to improve further. Teachers and governors are very positive about the impact you have had in your short time as interim headteacher. You know what needs to be done to accelerate improvement further. Plans are well advanced for the school to join a multi-academy trust in the summer. The school is already beginning to benefit from support provided by the trust. The school has an effective leadership team who are developing consistent approaches to strengthen provision across the school. They have been driving forward innovation and improvement. Pupils' work demonstrates the success of new strategies, especially in the current academic year. There is an unrelenting focus on continually improving teaching and learning through staff training and sharing of best practice.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the long-term leadership of the school is secured as quickly as possible
- while maintaining the engaging broad and balanced curriculum, the improvements in provision are reflected in Year 6 results in national tests
- the school's feedback and assessment policy is used consistently.

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

During the inspection, we met with you, your senior leaders, a group of classroom teachers, the chair and two other members of the governing body, a representative of the local authority, and two groups of pupils. Together with you and the deputy headteacher, we made short visits to nearly all classes to see samples of lessons and to see pupils at work. We reviewed school documents about self-evaluation and development planning, safeguarding including the single central record, and attendance and behaviour records. We examined a sample of pupils' books across a range of subjects. We also considered the responses from parents and staff.