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Mr Matt Cole
Headteacher
Woolsery Primary School
Woolsery
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Dear Mr Cole

Short inspection of Woolsery Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 08 March 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. You have made considerable changes to improve standards at Woolsery Primary School, which are beginning to bear fruit. The creation of a team of middle leaders has strengthened leadership and driven forward the improvements that you and governors have rightly prioritised.

Since the previous inspection, the school has become part of the Atlantic Coast Co-operative Trust, a federation with eight other north Devon primary schools. This is proving to be a mutually beneficial partnership where your staff have been able to share expertise, receive training and moderate pupils' work. Governors have also brought the pre-school under your leadership to ensure that the youngest children receive high-quality teaching.

At the previous inspection, you were asked to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Much work has gone into improving the quality of feedback pupils receive so they are clear about what they need to do to achieve the higher standards. Your staff have set about improving pupils' grammar, spelling and punctuation but you recognise that this work is in its infancy.

Safeguarding is effective.

Pupils are safe. You, as the designated safeguarding leader, and your deputy leader, are clear about your roles and responsibilities. You are both trained and

have a clear understanding of your roles, the local authority's threshold for intervention and the systems used. You are not afraid to challenge the local authority's multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) when you are not satisfied with the response or when other agencies are slow to react. Child protection records are maintained meticulously and show when you have demanded that cases are escalated.

You have ensured that all staff and governors are trained to a high level. They are able to identify when pupils need support and when pupils may face risks, for example from child sexual exploitation. The necessary checks are carried out on potential staff members to ensure that they are suitable to work in school before they take up post. Welfare arrangements in the pre-school meet requirements.

Inspection findings

- At the start of this inspection we agreed the main areas this inspection would focus on. These included:
 - the quality of pupils' writing, particularly the accuracy of their grammar, punctuation and spelling
 - how successful leaders have been in raising attainment in phonics
 - how well teaching staff in early years are helping the boys to improve
 - the outcomes for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities
 - the effectiveness of the arrangements to safeguard pupils, including pupils' attendance.
- Strong leadership is raising standards in pupils' writing. Leaders have worked with staff to plan learning which gives pupils the opportunity to write in a variety of styles. They plan to help pupils use a good range of vocabulary to add interest to their writing and to use direct speech accurately. Teachers' questioning gives pupils the opportunity to deepen their understanding. Leaders have deployed teaching assistants carefully to provide support and challenge for pupils who need it most. They have ensured that home learning is used effectively to raise pupils' comprehension skills. As a result, pupils are making good progress in writing across the curriculum and some pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are making accelerated progress. In Year 6, the proportion of pupils who are on track to reach the standard expected for their age is high and marks a significant improvement on 2016 results. However, pupils' punctuation and spelling are not strong enough to let pupils make the best possible progress and reach the highest standards.
- Children in Reception and pupils in Year 1 show good attitudes to their phonics work. Teachers use a variety of approaches to ensure that pupils' understanding of phonics is secure. Pupils are keen to help each other and, as a result, sound out correctly. Overall, pupils are making strong progress and an increased proportion of pupils in Year 1 are on track to meet or exceed the expected standard in the phonics screening check.
- Teaching staff have raised their expectations of what children in the early years

can achieve. Children have risen, and continue to rise, to this challenge. The pre-school leader is clear about the standards expected in the Reception class and has successfully translated these into steps that children in the pre-school need to take to be 'school ready'. Pre-school children hold their pencil correctly and are progressing from mark-making to writing individual letters. Some attempt to write their name. Consequently, children currently in the pre-school are more secure in their ability to read and write at higher levels.

- Staff in Reception plan learning which is increasing children's self-confidence and developing their skills, particularly in reading. Children's number work is strong. They can recognise two- and three-dimensional shapes, patterns and sequences, and are able to count at a standard appropriate for their age. There is more work to do with children in Reception and in the pre-school to raise standards further, particularly in accurately forming letters and in children using their phonic knowledge when writing.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities have not achieved well by the end of key stage 2 in recent years. This is principally due to the particular needs of the small number of pupils who have education, health and care plans. The inclusion team leader, who is also the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo), is appropriately trained, and keeps up to date by participating in the federation SENCo network. Consequently, she is well placed to support teachers and teaching assistants. The SENCo has worked with class teachers to draw up 'provision maps', which teachers use well to ensure that pupils receive the support they need in the classroom. Careful and robust monitoring of the progress that these pupils make is in place. This highlights what is going well and where change to the provision or approach is needed. Funding is used effectively to meet these needs. As a result of thoughtful planning by class teachers and the SENCo, the need for pupils to be extracted from their class for intervention has been reduced dramatically. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are increasingly independent and self-assured.
- Arrangements for safeguarding are secure. In recent years, some groups of pupils, such as disadvantaged pupils, have had poor attendance. Leaders have taken effective action to arrest this pattern. Pupils' attendance is now in line with the levels that are typical nationally. Persistent absence has fallen dramatically. No groups of pupils now cause concern. Parents commented that their children enjoy school and are keen not to miss a day. As one parent, typical of many, said, 'My child loves school and comes home stimulated and is always keen to tell me what he has been up to and what he has learned – the school challenges him to achieve his full potential.'

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils improve the accuracy of their spelling and use of punctuation
- in early years, children's writing improves further, particularly their letter formation and their use of their phonic knowledge when writing

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

Yours sincerely

Iain Freeland
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, you joined me observing learning in classrooms and hearing pupils read. We looked at a number of pupils' books. I spoke with pupils in lessons and while playing before the start of the day. I met with a number of parents at the start of the day. Meetings were held with you, middle leaders and three governors. I also spoke with an officer of the local authority.

I scrutinised a wide range of documentation, including the school's own self-evaluation and development plan, assessment information and safeguarding records. I considered the views of 39 parents who responded to Parent View and the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaires of 42 pupils and 20 members of staff. I also took into account the contents of a letter received.