

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



24 March 2017

Angela Butcher
Headteacher
Watford Field School (Infant & Nursery)
Neal Street
Watford
Hertfordshire
WD18 0WF

Dear Mrs Butcher

Short inspection of Watford Field School (Infant & Nursery)

Following my visit to the school on 07 March 2017 with Kim Pigram 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 November 2011.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Watford Field School (Infant and Nursery) has maintained the positive vision and values identified at the previous inspection, through which pupils develop strong academic and social skills. Many parents commented in Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, on the support and guidance offered by staff to pupils and parents. Parents wrote about the 'warm, nurturing and supportive staff', the school's 'brilliant response' to the special educational needs of some pupils and 'the excellent progress' made by their children. One parent stated that, 'Watford Field is a happy place where children are excited to learn.'

In collaboration with your leadership team and the board of governors, you are addressing effectively the priorities identified in your school improvement plan. The previous inspection identified issues with opportunities for children to contribute to their own learning, and you have ensured that this is now robustly embedded. For example, children's interests and needs inform the curriculum. In addition, early years staff have developed the outside area very effectively to ensure that children develop a range of skills. A particular strength of your work is the way in which every year group builds sequentially on the learning of the previous year group. From Nursery to Year 2, staff develop and enrich pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding of the world. You and your leadership team work with staff to ensure that pupils receive the support they need to make progress.

Governance at Watford Field is strong. The governing board has a breadth of expertise and holds the leadership to account. Governors have high expectations and aspirations for pupils' academic progress and emotional and social well-being. They focus on supporting the priorities identified in the school improvement plan. Their reports comment on the positive changes in pupils' attitudes towards learning.

Pupils are very well behaved. They are welcoming, kind and respectful of the views of others. Pupils have the opportunity to engage in democracy through school council elections. Pupils that I spoke to were very excited about participating in voting for their class representatives. One pupil on the school council told me that they collect the 'wishes and worries' of their fellow pupils and present them to the headteacher with their recommendations. Pupils are enthusiastic about learning, and listen attentively to their teachers and each other. You have ensured that pupils have access to a well-balanced curriculum, that develops their key skills through exciting topics. Children in the Nursery, for example, develop scientific skills through studying the life cycle of plants by growing vegetables in the outside area.

You correctly judge teaching and learning to be a strength. Staff plan and review the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics collaboratively. They provide effective support to ensure that pupils' needs are met. The previous inspection identified the importance of ensuring that pupils know how to improve their work. The use of assessment continues to be an appropriate focus for improvement. Some teachers do not adhere consistently to the school's feedback policy. Consequently, some pupils are unsure of how to improve their work. Provision in early years is also an identified strength. Children are excited to learn, and activities are challenging. Staff develop children's early reading, writing, mathematics and communication skills well. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities receive tailored support to ensure that their academic, and social and emotional needs are met effectively. The school promotes a positive ethos of inclusion, where all pupils have equal access to good quality teaching and learning.

You and your leaders take effective action when you consider improvements are required. For example, you have introduced strategies to accelerate pupils' language and communication skills. You are aware of the critical importance of language development for pupils, to ensure that they can successfully access the curriculum. You are also aware of the attendance issues of some pupils and have focused on engaging pupils in the school day through a range of strategies.

Safeguarding is effective.

Staff ensure the safety of pupils through effective school procedures. Pupils told me that they knew to go to a member of staff if they had a problem. Staff ensure the safety of pupils through effective school procedures. All parents who responded to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, agreed that their children are safe and happy and that staff are 'caring' and 'go the extra mile'. The school also provides additional parenting support and one parent wrote that the staff, 'provide good guidance on how I can support my child at home.'

Leaders, including governors, ensure that safeguarding procedures at the school are rigorously implemented. Records are diligently maintained and reviewed regularly to ensure the safety of all pupils. Leaders are tenacious in ensuring the physical and emotional wellbeing of all pupils. Staff receive regular training in safeguarding and know what to do to ensure the well-being of pupils.

Inspection findings

- A key line of enquiry to ascertain whether the school remained good was the low attendance of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. It was lower than that of pupils nationally in 2016. Persistent absence for these groups was also high. You have recognised the importance of monitoring and evaluating the attendance of these groups. You have focused on ensuring that parents and pupils value the importance of regular attendance at school, through social events and school-based incentives such as the 'wake up, shake up' class. It is too early to measure the impact of these strategies.
- I also looked at whether the improvements in progress and attainment in reading, writing and mathematics at key stage 1 can be sustained. Through stimulating topics, pupils' key skills, knowledge and understanding are well developed. For example, the focus on London facilitated extended writing and reading opportunities. Staff support pupils' reading skills highly effectively. Pupils receive appropriate guidance dependent on their current ability. You have correctly recognised the critical importance of language development as a potential barrier to learning for some pupils. Accordingly, you have embedded a range of strategies to develop pupils' vocabulary and understanding of grammar. Leadership of the teaching of English as an additional language is robust. However, some teaching does not do enough to develop pupils' English language acquisition which is vital if pupils are to have full access to teaching in all subjects.
- In many classes, pupils' progress is rapid. In Year 1, for example, I looked at some pupils' writing and they had progressed quickly from one word sentences to writing in compound and complex sentences. However, some teachers do not always provide effective feedback, because they do not adhere to the school policy. This slows progress for some pupils.
- I also considered the effectiveness of teaching and learning in early years. Staff plan exciting and challenging activities to ensure that children enjoy learning and make progress. Staff nurture links to the real world to ensure that children can apply their developing skills effectively. For example, children enjoy digging and planting in the outside area. This resulted in reading, writing, mathematics and communications opportunities. The children's interest in spiders and caterpillars has been developed by staff, culminating in children applying their creative language skills to writing by suggesting names for the class caterpillar.
- Teachers ensure that pupils of all abilities are provided with appropriate academic and pastoral support to help them make strong progress. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make progress in line with other pupils. Staff are aware of the specific needs of each pupil and ensure that they receive tailored, personalised support. Leadership of the teaching of special education needs and/or disabilities is robust. There is a strong ethos of inclusion, whereby all pupils,

regardless of their respective starting points, are fully included in lessons. Pupils I spoke to were happy to be at the school, and you have recognised that emotional and social wellbeing is fundamental to academic development.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- you continue to develop strategies to improve attendance and reduce absence
- strategies to ensure that teaching develops pupils' English language acquisition are further embedded
- staff provide pertinent feedback and guidance to pupils to accelerate their progress.

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

Yours sincerely

Susan Aykin
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

- During the course of this inspection, inspectors held meetings with you, other senior and middle leaders, and a group of four governors, including the chair of governors.
- We spoke with pupils informally in classrooms and when walking around the school site. We also met with a group of 12 pupils.
- We visited each class and observed pupils at work.
- We undertook a scrutiny of pupils' work in their books and folders.
- Policies and procedures for the safeguarding of pupils were examined, along with the school's record of checks carried out on staff working at the school.
- A range of documents were analysed or discussed, including: the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans; documents relating to pupils' achievement, attendance and behaviour; minutes of governor meetings; and curriculum plans.
- I considered the views of 25 parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as the views parents expressed via free text.