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Mr Matt O'Grady
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Dear Mr O'Grady

Short inspection of West Horndon Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 27 April 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 February 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 an inspiring leader who sets high expectations for staff, and the senior leadership team leads by example. In all of our discussions, your relentless drive and ambition for continuous improvement came across strongly. Staff are right behind you in striving for the best possible outcomes for pupils' academic achievement and in their personal development. Parents recognise this too, as seen in the many positive comments that they made during the inspection. They told me that they appreciate the strong community and family feel that the school provides. They said that:

- 'children are exposed to outdoor learning and have a rich and fulfilling curriculum'
- 'staff give children the desire to want to do well'
- 'the school provides us with lots of knowledge which we love so that we can talk about what our children have been up to each day'
- 'every teacher knows every child and takes an interest in their well-being and progress'
- 'the school is five star, one hundred percent, all the way'.

And staff said:

- 'it's a pleasure to work here'
- 'my views are listened to and I feel valued'
- 'we all work together as a strong team'
- 'the leadership team is very effective and provides me with useful and appropriate feedback to support my professional development'.

You have addressed the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection successfully. Targets set for pupils' learning in English and mathematics are now referred to frequently by staff in lessons and they are shared with pupils and their parents. This means that pupils are clear about what they are aiming for and that teachers are able to tailor learning to individual pupils' needs. Even so, the written tasks set for pupils to record their learning in foundation subjects (non-core subjects) are not challenging enough for most pupils. Most pupils are not applying the skills they develop in English when they are writing in other subjects. As a result, pupils' written work in their foundation subjects' books did not reflect the good progress and attainment that they are achieving in English writing and mathematics.

As well as improving the effective use of targets to raise achievement since the previous inspection, you have also revised and improved the way that you write targets for staff development and appraisal. You have also ensured that parents are kept informed of what their children are learning at school and how well they are doing. I saw parents and grandparents of Reception-aged children working together on painting, drawing, reading and imaginative play first thing in the morning. This provided the adults with clear insight into typical activities in Reception and gave children immense pleasure in showing their family members what they can do. Other parents told me about 'women/men in school days', when they are invited to spend a whole day in school, and also about meetings and the school's excellent use of technology to keep in touch with parents using social networks.

The school's strong values and promotion of equality and diversity are threaded through all aspects of its work. High-quality provision for pupils with speech, language and communication difficulties in the school's enhanced provision is one of many examples. Parents who have children in this provision speak highly of staff who support and develop their children's communication skills, settling them into school and helping them to progress academically and socially. All leaders demonstrated extensive in-depth knowledge of pupils' needs, abilities, interests and circumstances. Consequently, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, disadvantaged pupils and those who speak English as an additional language make similar progress to other pupils.

Your approach to curriculum development is innovative. You and other staff are always seeking to explore and introduce new ways of stimulating and inspiring pupils to learn eagerly. Every space in the building is capitalised upon to capture pupils' interest and their inquisitiveness. For example, the library is well stocked with a range of fiction and non-fiction books. An eye-catching display of books

about the latest 'Star Wars' film, accompanied by music from the feature film, whets pupils' appetites for a planned 'Star Wars' theme day coming up later in the term. You are just about to introduce a school-led version of a scheme developed and designed by ex-military personnel. This involves pupils developing skills in team-building, positivity and resilience that will be beneficial for their learning now and in their future lives.

Many members of the governing body are new. They have brought a wider range of skills to governance that are capitalised upon to fulfil the governing body's statutory duties. They are developing their approach in monitoring the school's work well and learning to question their findings. They are more knowledgeable about pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics than in other subjects. In particular, they are insistent that e-safety is a priority in a school that is up to date in using technology effectively as a tool for learning. You and the governors have an accurate view of the school's performance. You know where improvements are needed and, importantly, how to make them.

Safeguarding is effective.

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The designated safeguarding leads are properly trained to fulfil the role. The leadership team ensures that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality.

Leaders have created a culture of shared responsibility for everyone to safeguard pupils. In particular, teaching pupils how to stay safe online and keeping parents well informed of the potential risks associated with pupils' use of technologies are suitably high priorities.

The safeguarding policy has been updated and it is implemented consistently. The policy reflects the latest guidance from the Department for Education. The single central record of statutory checks on all staff and adults working with pupils is completed properly to ensure their suitability to work with children. Requirements for recruiting staff are followed carefully and documents to evidence this are held securely in staff files.

Staff receive regular training and updates about safeguarding to ensure that they are kept informed of any key changes. New terminology is explained to staff and the leaders test their understanding. Staff log their concerns about potentially vulnerable pupils in writing and the designated leads take action quickly to follow them up. An overview of every action is recorded diligently to ensure that referrals and actions are completed on time.

Inspection findings

- To determine that the school remained good, one of my key lines of enquiry was about pupils' achievement in the full range of subjects.
- The school's 2016 national test results show that Year 6 pupils made above-

average progress from their starting points in reading and mathematics and at least average progress in writing. All pupils' attainment was above average in reading, writing and mathematics, including that of disadvantaged pupils.

- Work I saw in pupils' English and mathematics books and the school's latest information about pupils' learning confirm that current pupils across the school are making good progress.
- Scrutiny of their written work in other subjects showed that pupils are not transferring their skills consistently when they write about their learning in other subjects.
- The previous inspection identified three things for the school to work on. These included:
 - teachers using the targets set for pupils' achievement effectively in their teaching to match work to pupils' differing abilities
 - ensuring that detailed records are kept of targets set to improve staff's professional skills
 - increasing the range of information made available to parents about their children's learning.
- My findings confirm that teachers use targets well to set pupils' work at the right level of difficulty in reading, writing and mathematics, but work set for pupils in other subjects is often too easy, especially for the most able. You have refined and improved documentation for performance management and staff appraisal. Parents confirmed that they receive a wealth of information about their children's learning and the majority are complimentary about all that the school provides.
- The proportion of children reaching a good level of development at the end of the Reception Year has improved year on year since the previous inspection, but the national data shows that this is close to but below average. This was another key line of enquiry. I found that good provision in the early years ensures that children are making strong progress from their individual starting points and parents were delighted with their children's progress.
- The school's national data does not accurately reflect the progress that children make in Reception. The size of each cohort is relatively small, which reduces the reliability of the information. In addition, the data includes the achievement of young children new to the school, with significant speech, language and communication difficulties.
- Children supported through the enhanced provision make strong progress from their starting points. It takes longer than the Reception Year for them to make rapid progress in reading, writing and mathematics, but they do once time allows, and the impact of the extra help they receive from teachers and speech and language therapists is discernible.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the quality of pupils' written work in foundation subjects improves by:
 - ensuring that pupils use and apply the skills they develop in English writing across the full range of subjects
 - checking that the written work that teachers set in foundation subjects is sufficiently challenging for pupils' differing abilities, especially the most able
 - improving governors' understanding of curriculum requirements and pupils' achievement across the full range of subjects taught.

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

Yours sincerely

Linda Killman
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

- I held meetings with you, the deputy headteacher, the special needs coordinator (SENCO), the early years leader, the chair of the governing body and a parent governor.
- We discussed the key lines of enquiry for this inspection, the school's internal evaluation of its performance, plans for future improvement, the curriculum and information about current pupils' learning.
- You and I observed teaching and learning in all classes. We looked at a sample of pupils' written work in English, mathematics and other subjects.
- I examined the school's safeguarding arrangements, including records, files and documentation. Discussions were held with the designated safeguarding leads.
- The views of 62 parents who responded to Parent View and 16 staff who completed Ofsted's staff questionnaire were taken into account. I spoke to many parents with children in Reception, those with children in the school's enhanced provision, established parents and parents new to the school.
- I spoke to a representative from the local authority on the telephone and met with the school's independent improvement adviser in person.