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Lindsey Wilmer  
Headteacher  
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Staffordshire  
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Dear Mrs Wilmer

### **Short inspection of Friarswood Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 16 May 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 readily acknowledge that the school experienced a dip in the quality of teaching, which had an impact on the rates of progress made by pupils, particularly in key stage 2. These weaknesses have now been eradicated and staff are united in their effort to ensure that pupils achieve as well as possible, while still enjoying the experience of learning. You have shared clear expectations of all staff and provided the necessary training so that they learn from relevant expertise and recognised best practice. You have developed an open, approachable and realistic leadership style while driving forward your determination for improved standards.

Pupils say that learning is fun at Friarswood because lessons are interesting. Two Year 6 pupils explained: 'In mathematics, teachers come up with imaginative ways to get us thinking. When we explain our reasoning, we have to convince our teacher that our methods work.' Pupils of all ages are able to accurately discuss their work. They know what is expected of them in each lesson and how to judge their success. Pupils were keen to explain that they feel safe because they can trust everyone at school: 'We look out for each other. It's like a family.' Pupils are particularly keen on achieving their daily mile exercise in the school grounds during lunchtimes. Pupils have been instrumental in contributing to the school's shared values and they are proud of the different responsibilities they have in school.

You have continued to focus on the areas for improvement identified in the last inspection report. The improvements included raising the progress rates of the most able pupils and identifying underachievement. Inspectors also identified the need to improve teachers' questioning. Since the last inspection, the school has experienced a significant turnover of staff for a variety of reasons. As a consequence, some of the areas for improvement remain a current priority. Pupils' progress was erratic from year to year because of inconsistencies in the quality of teaching in key stage 2. The significant turnaround of staff further contributed to pupils' slowed progress. A secure staffing structure was established in September last year. Staff are suitably knowledgeable, skilled and experienced and historical weaknesses in the quality of teaching have been successfully eradicated.

You have focused sharply on ensuring that the most able pupils attain the standard of greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics. Current information indicates a significant acceleration of pupils' progress. As a result, a much higher proportion of the most able pupils are now working at greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics.

All staff know and demonstrate a range of questioning techniques and pupils now explain and justify their answers in considerable detail. They think carefully before responding and adopt questioning techniques themselves when talking with partners or seeking greater clarity.

The stability in staffing and the introduction of systems to improve pupils' achievements are recent developments. There are signs of success in the consistently good quality of teaching, pupils' work and the information you keep to track pupils' progress. You are aware that these new practices must be embedded so that any pupil at risk of falling behind is quickly identified and supported. Furthermore, the progress of the most able pupils continues to be one of your high priorities so that they receive the challenges they need to achieve high standards.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders, staff and governors are strongly committed to pupils' safety and well-being. All policies regarding safeguarding are impressively detailed, informative and up to date. All staff are trained annually and ongoing updates are provided in open discussion, for example to consider possible responses to a variety of scenarios. All new staff are trained as part of their induction so that they are fully aware of safeguarding roles, responsibilities and processes. When concerns arise, leaders take speedy action, refer matters to the appropriate agencies and maintain detailed records to track the support and its effectiveness.

Regular assessments of risk are made regarding premises, events, educational visits and residential trips.

All checks on staff, visitors and volunteers are complete, up to date and suitably detailed. Governors and leaders have been trained in safer recruitment and thorough checks are made before staff or governor appointments. Pupils speak

confidently about how to stay safe when using social media. Elected pupils serving on the school council contribute well to relevant school policies, such as anti-bullying measures.

### **Inspection findings**

- You clearly communicated an urgent need to rapidly improve pupils' progress in key stage 2 across all subjects. You provided substantial training for all staff and checked frequently on how well the necessary changes were implemented. Training focused sharply on developing teachers' subject knowledge and identifying what pupils needed to do to achieve standards at greater depth. Subject leaders now check how well subjects are taught, identify where there is good practice to share and spot where improvements are needed. You introduced a new system for recording teachers' assessments of pupils so that all school leaders and teachers could track pupils' progress with greater precision. Pupils' progress is now under constant scrutiny so that difficulties are speedily identified and specific support provided. In addition, pupils' potential is recognised and appropriate extension is planned. As one Year 4 pupil explained, 'Sometimes the work is hard but you have to have a go to see if you can get it right.'
- You quickly established that attainment by the end of key stage 2 was everyone's responsibility and not solely dependent on the Year 6 teacher. Staff are united in their commitment and ambition for all pupils to do their best. They focus relentlessly on accelerating pupils' progress to meet ambitious targets. In lessons, pupils concentrate diligently. They can explain confidently and accurately what is expected of them. They say work is just right and 'It makes you think.' Progress in pupils' books and your assessment information indicate that more pupils are working at standards appropriate for their age.
- Pupils who have learning difficulties are identified quickly. The coordinator for special educational needs loses no time in helping staff to analyse the cause of the difficulty, providing substantial advice on how best to support individual pupils and reviewing how well pupils respond. She seeks external expertise where necessary and works closely with parents to identify how best to support pupils. The development of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is checked scrupulously. As a consequence, they make good progress. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is well below the national average. Nevertheless, their needs are carefully assessed and a range of interventions are available to ensure that they achieve well.
- The success of the early years foundation stage and key stage 1 outcomes are due to the experienced, dedicated and enthusiastic staff who remain open to improvement and are keen to learn. They support each other well and share their expertise. All adults involved in teaching phonics have suitable levels of skill and they teach consistently well. They know how to ensure pupils' success.
- Attendance is generally in line with the national average for primary schools. The proportion of persistent absences in 2016 was higher than the national average

because a small number of pupils experienced specific long-term health problems.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that all staff continue to:

- secure pupils' rapid progress by embedding and further developing recently introduced approaches to teaching and assessment
- identify and support all pupils at risk of falling behind
- provide suitable challenge for the most able pupils to enable them to attain standards at greater depth.

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

Yours sincerely

Deana Holdaway  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection I met with you, the assistant headteacher, the leaders for mathematics, English and the curriculum, the special educational needs coordinator and pupils. I had a telephone conversation with the chair of the governing body. I observed lessons with you and I looked at pupils' work. I considered the responses from the staff questionnaire and Parent View. I looked at a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation and plans for development, the school's website and feedback from local authority reviews. I considered information regarding pupils' standards of attainment and rates of progress and a range of school policies, including safeguarding and the impact of additional government funding.