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Mrs Jacqueline Baron
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Dear Mrs Jacqueline Baron

Short inspection of Wood End First School

Following my visit to the school on 21 February 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 July 2012.

This school continues to be good.

You are a highly respected, dedicated and knowledgeable leader. You and the perceptive deputy headteacher form an effective partnership. Together you have built a skilled, devoted and valued team of staff who do all that they can to help the pupils in your care. Parents rightly describe staff as approachable and very helpful. You, the staff and the governing body are ambitious for all pupils. You have a good understanding of the school's effectiveness and use this well to make careful changes to teaching and learning. Consequently, the leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection and ensured that the school is continuing to improve.

Pupils' personal development comes first in this school that some describe as 'a family community'. With the help of staff, pupils on the 'walking bus' practise their sounds and chant numbers as they travel to school. Outside and in the breakfast club, pupils of all ages play together. Two groups of pupils staged a friendly 'battle of the rock bands' competition on the playground to the delight of the midday supervisors. The school day starts and ends with special times that give pupils the chance to sit in circles to talk, listen and learn from each other. Everyone upholds your high expectations for pupils' behaviour. As a result, pupils are polite, caring and conduct themselves extremely well around the school.

You have maintained the strengths identified at the last inspection. Pupils' attainment in reading at the end of key stage 1 has continued to be close to or

above the national averages. The proportion of pupils reaching a greater depth in reading was above that of others nationally last year. The very large majority of pupils meet the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check. Most children in the Reception class reach a good level of development and are well prepared for Year 1. Disadvantaged pupils of all ages and abilities achieve similarly to their classmates and other pupils nationally in all subjects. You have also addressed the areas for improvement that inspectors identified. Leaders, including the special needs coordinator, use their skills well to make improvements to teaching and learning. Teachers have high expectations for the achievement of all pupils and ensure that they are actively involved in their learning. You have made changes to the teaching of writing and mathematics so that pupils make good progress in these subjects. Nevertheless, you rightly recognise that there are some further changes to make to the teaching of mathematics and pupils' use of punctuation in the light of the demands of the new national expectations.

Safeguarding is effective.

You actively involve everyone in keeping pupils safe by promoting strong relationships between staff, parents and pupils. Staff take time to build trusting partnerships with parents that enable you to act in the best interests of pupils. This includes providing effective early help to families, should they need it. You have established strong systems that enable staff to raise concerns and share important information to keep pupils safe. Safeguarding records are of high quality. Recruitment checks are up to date and meet current requirements. Governors ensure that these arrangements are rigorous, fit for purpose and that everyone understands them.

You take pupils' safety seriously in all aspects of school life. You keep this under constant review and make changes to further enhance safety systems. For example, you have recently improved the quality of risk assessments. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe and make safe choices when playing games. Around the school, staff ensure that pupils are as safe as possible. Incidents of poor behaviour and bullying are very rare. Consequently, pupils demonstrate appropriate confidence and trust in staff and each other.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection we looked closely at specific aspects of the school's provision, including: the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements, the impact of support that is provided for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, how well leaders have ensured that the school has continued to improve, particularly in writing and mathematics, and your work to improve the attendance of some groups of pupils.
- You have provided tailored support to teaching staff to improve pupils' learning. For example, the deputy headteacher has led a successful project to further develop expertise amongst teaching assistants. As a result, teaching assistants show strong subject knowledge and a high level of skill. In lessons, they provide just the right amount of support to pupils, giving prompts or asking searching questions that promote pupils' thinking.

- As soon as children start school, there is a clear emphasis on securing reading and writing skills. Phonics lessons in all year groups are well matched to pupils' different abilities. This enables them to acquire this essential learning and become confident readers and spellers. Children in the early years practise writing letters and start to join their handwriting. All children complete writing homework each week. There are also lots of opportunities for children to write for a range of reasons. Some children playing in the 'hospital' recorded the symptoms of their patients, along with their 'treatment'. Last year, most children reached the expected level of development in writing at the end of the Reception Year.
- You have made valuable changes to the teaching of writing in key stage 1. Pupils have more opportunities to build up skills and stamina in their writing. Pupils' books show that they are making good progress from their starting points. Some pupils are making rapid progress from low starting points. However, you rightly recognise that pupils do not always make the best use of punctuation to give their writing clear meaning.
- From September, you have introduced a new 'mastery' approach to the teaching of mathematics. Teachers aim for all pupils to achieve the standards expected for their age. Together with the staff, you have agreed how you will teach pupils to calculate effectively. There is a stronger emphasis on securing essential skills before challenging pupils to apply these to mathematical problems. As a result, current pupils are mostly making good progress in mathematics. Nevertheless, you know that you need to continue to embed this curriculum and provide pupils with more opportunities to practise their mathematics to secure high levels of achievement.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make at least good progress from their starting points. Some are catching up with their classmates. Staff learn about each pupil in detail through careful assessment and extended discussions with parents. This enables them to provide pupils with very effective, precise support in the classroom and extra activities that address their individual needs. The special educational needs coordinator is ambitious for these pupils and thinks critically about the impact of the extra help that they receive. When necessary, she refines this support to increase pupils' progress.
- You have high expectations for pupils' attendance. You make this very clear to parents as soon as children start at the school. You and the staff then continue to communicate the importance of coming to school each day, at every opportunity. Pupils know that they all have a part to play to receive attendance certificates and be awarded the class 'attendance bear'. Senior leaders follow up all absences determinedly and take all opportunities to provide effective challenge to the families of pupils with high rates of absence. The governing body check the impact of this work, and challenge you well to help you secure improved attendance for all pupils. As a result, pupils' attendance is now similar to the national average. This includes pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, and disadvantaged pupils.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to develop teaching and learning in mathematics to further accelerate pupils' progress
- pupils use punctuation with greater accuracy when writing across the curriculum in key stage 1.

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

Yours sincerely

Caroline Dulon
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, the deputy headteacher, the special needs coordinator, four governors and a representative of the local authority. I visited all classes, all jointly with you and the deputy headteacher, to look at teaching and learning. I looked at pupils' work in their exercise books. While observing playtime and breakfast club, I spoke informally to pupils. I took into account responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, as well as speaking to a number of parents at the start of the school day. I also considered responses to the staff questionnaire. I evaluated a range of documents, including minutes of the governing body meetings and safeguarding policies, procedures and checks.