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Mr Lyndon Evans
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Evans

Short inspection of Wheatfields Junior Mixed School

Following my visit to the school on 6 June 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. Pupils benefit from good-quality teaching and a curriculum that in most subjects prepares them well for the next stage in their education. You, the governors and your team have ensured over the last two years that standards are above average in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils are developing key skills in subjects such as information and communication technology, physical education and French. You have concentrated on improving the teaching and learning in science and this is evident from the regular opportunities that pupils have to carry out experiments. In history and geography, the teaching is not as good because the expectations of what pupils can achieve are not high enough.

You and the governing body have ensured that teaching and learning have improved since the last inspection. For example, the work to improve the teaching and learning of mathematics has resulted in a curriculum that is a strength of the school. In all classes visited, pupils regularly carry out reasoning and problem-solving activities that stretch pupils of all abilities and develop resilience and fluency with numbers.

Typically, in lessons and around the school, most pupils are well behaved, work hard and enjoy the positive relationships that they have with each other and the adults in school. Pupils spoken to recognise that there are a few pupils with challenging behaviour, but maturely explain how this does not concern them as the teachers manage these pupils effectively.

I was concerned to find that a number of parents do not agree that the school manages bullying and behaviour well enough. Consequently, I made this the main line of enquiry on this inspection. Having examined all the evidence, I am assured that you and the governors have established a safe environment in which bullying incidents and behaviour are effectively managed.

Nevertheless, leaders and governors have not communicated well enough with parents so that those who are concerned about aspects of leadership and management are confident that incidents of bullying or misbehaviour, when they arise, are dealt with effectively.

Safeguarding is effective.

Last year, the local authority carried out a review of the management of bullying and made recommendations to improve some aspects of your work when dealing with the occasional incidents of bullying. All the relevant policies and procedures have been reviewed and improvements have been made. This is evident from the meticulous records of behaviour and bullying incidents where swift and appropriate action is taken to ensure that pupils are kept safe. All the pupils that I selected to speak to and nearly all those that responded to the Ofsted pupil questionnaire considered that they feel safe in school. They were aware that bullying occasionally takes place, but that this is not typical and they were not worried about this because they trust the staff to deal effectively with incidents when they arise.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. You have ensured that all the checks are made on staff to ensure that they can work with children. Records show that all staff are up to date with safeguarding training, including 'Prevent' training.

Vulnerable pupils, including those who have difficulty managing their behaviour, are well supported by the inclusion team. Productive partnerships are established with outside agencies to safeguard pupils: for example, those that are looked after by the local authority.

Inspection findings

- In 2016, test results at the end of Year 6 showed that boys of middle or lower ability made less progress than others when writing. The literacy coordinator has effectively led the improvements to teaching and learning. Work in books shows that over the year the quality of boys' writing is improving, demonstrating good progress. Boys are making fewer mistakes in spelling, punctuation and grammar. Some still need to work on their presentation, which is not as tidy as it could be.
- Over the last two years, pupils who are supported because they have special educational needs have made slower progress than other pupils. The inclusion leader has made the improvement in progress a priority this year. Effective action has been taken to ensure that all teachers and teaching assistants plan to meet the particular needs of this group of pupils in lessons. In a number of lessons

observed, teaching assistants were giving pupils valuable support with their work. Consequently, the work in books shows that faster progress is being made by this group.

- Progress in mathematics last year was a bit slower than in reading at the end of Year 6. The changes made by the mathematics leader have been very effective in ensuring that there is consistently good-quality mathematics teaching and learning across the school.
- History and geography are not as well taught as other subjects. This is because insufficient attention is paid to ensuring that tasks are challenging enough for pupils to complete. The tasks planned do not develop the subject-specific skills and ideas well enough. For example, map-reading skills are taught, but with insufficient rigour to ensure that pupils are developing the ability to read a map independently.
- Positive aspects of the teaching of history and geography are that pupils take part in some interesting activities that capture the imagination and they also have regular opportunities to apply literacy and numeracy skills in these lessons.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they improve the communication and information given to parents so that concerns about aspects of leadership and management are alleviated
- the quality of teaching and learning in history and geography improves across the school.

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

Tim Bristow
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, the assistant headteacher, governors, administration staff and a representative from the local authority. Informal meetings were held with 24 pupils from Years 3 to 6 in small groups where bullying and behaviour management were discussed. Visits were made to classrooms, where teaching was observed and books were scrutinised. A range of documents, policies and assessment information was examined. Questionnaire and text responses from 105 parents, 37 pupils and 17 staff were also examined.