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Mr Plunkett
Headteacher
Wymondley Junior Mixed and Infant School
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Dear Mr Plunkett

Short inspection of Wymondley Junior Mixed and Infant School

Following my visit to the school on 10 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 November 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. Since you became headteacher in September 2016, you have swiftly and accurately identified the school's strengths and where it needs to improve. Your arrival coincided with several other staff changes and you have used your strong leadership skills to develop the team. You have appointed new subject leaders for English and mathematics. Together, you and your staff are driving the school forward effectively.

The strong values which underpin the school's ethos of 'responsible, respectful, remarkable' are promoted effectively through the curriculum. The curriculum is broad and balanced, and enriched by a range of clubs, including for sport, and through regular visits and visitors. All pupils benefit from high-quality music tuition on a weekly basis. The school provides a happy and welcoming environment. Classrooms are bright and colourful, with lots to support and challenge pupils' learning and thinking. Displays in corridors reflect the breadth of pupils' learning experiences over the year, such as key stage 1 work relating to the Great Fire of London, and art work relating to pupils' learning about the Chinese New Year.

Pupils care for and support each other well; for example, Year 6 pupils act as buddies for younger children. Pupils benefit from spacious grounds in which to play and enjoy structured sporting opportunities at lunchtimes, led by a sports coach.

Parents convey a high level of satisfaction, and many are particularly complimentary about your effective leadership. They recognise improvements made since your arrival and value the regular opportunities you provide for contact because you are always in the playground before and after school. As one parent commented, this 'is a sunny, happy school'. Staff also rate your leadership highly, they enjoy working at the school and are proud to do so.

Governors have supported you effectively in introducing new initiatives. They visit the school regularly to find out things for themselves. They use the school improvement plan and your headteacher's reports to monitor, evaluate and review the work of the school. They have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement.

You have ensured that the new leaders for mathematics and English have benefited from appropriate training, both from yourself and through support from local authority advisers. Leaders in turn have provided training for all staff to support them to implement new approaches to the teaching of mathematics and English. These approaches are leading to more consistently good teaching and learning, which is impacting positively on the progress and attainment of pupils across the school.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding pupils. All aspects of safeguarding have a high priority. All staff and governors recognise their responsibility to ensure that pupils are kept safe and secure, as well as learning how to keep themselves safe. Systems for ensuring that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose are highly organised and efficient.

All the necessary checks are made on staff prior to them taking up their appointments. Since September 2016, new fencing has been put in place together with renewed entry systems and security cameras in order to increase site security. Leaders and governors ensure that staff are kept up to date with all the required training and information, including the 'Prevent' duty. Prominently displayed information means that all staff and visitors know the procedures for reporting any concerns they may have. Staff know pupils very well and are quick to identify concerns, which are swiftly investigated.

Pupils who I met during my visit said they felt very safe, 'because everyone knows us, is kind and teachers know us well'. They have a good understanding of different kinds of bullying, including cyber bullying. Pupils were very keen to tell me how bullying and name-calling are extremely rare because everyone gets on so well. They are confident that if they do have concerns, an adult will sort these out. Pupils describe how the school helps them to understand how to stay safe when using the internet and how 'Hector the dolphin' protects them.

Inspection findings

- My first key line of enquiry for the inspection was attendance. This is because in

2016, overall attendance was below the national average and the absence and persistent absence rates for some pupils who were known to be entitled to free school meals were high. We established that the historic high absence and persistent absence rates for this group were explained by the illness of a very small proportion of pupils.

- You have robust procedures in place to follow up on absences and to encourage all pupils to attend regularly. There are rewards for high attendance, frequent reminders to parents about the importance of regular attendance and timely contact and support if any child's attendance starts to slip. Because of the actions taken, current attendance overall has improved and is in line with that seen nationally. However, there are still pupils whose attendance is below this. You presented case studies of the school's work to improve the attendance of these pupils and how this is bringing about improvement. Appropriate arrangements are in place to ensure that pupils attend regularly.
- The next area of focus was about attainment and pupils' rates of progress in reading, writing and mathematics in key stage 2, and whether differences between the attainment of boys and girls are diminishing. This is because outcomes in the 2016 key stage 2 tests were below the current government floor standards, indicating poor performance. There also were gaps between the attainment of boys and girls in reading, writing and mathematics. During this inspection, I found that you and your subject leaders for English and mathematics have acted swiftly to change the approaches to the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics, and have provided effective training for all staff to implement these changes successfully.
- Dedicated sessions now take place each day to teach the required reading skills in each year group. New texts were purchased and appropriately 'banded', and pupils, particularly the boys, now choose and enjoy books at the right level and that interest them. A high proportion of parents attend shared reading sessions with their children. As a result of the changes, pupils are reading more often and with more understanding. Reading skills have increased across key stage 2 and in key stage 1, representing good progress from pupils' starting points.
- Training in the teaching of writing has made staff more aware of the standards pupils must reach by the end of each year. There are now regular sessions for all pupils to write at length and more opportunities to write about interesting things that they are learning about in their topic work. The changes and additional support are ensuring that pupils who fall behind catch up quickly. You recognise that the quality of writing is not consistently good across the school. In addition, some work in topic books is not as well presented or of similar quality to pupils' work in their English books.
- Work in pupils' books shows that they are developing a deeper knowledge and understanding of mathematical skills and concepts as a result of teachers' improved teaching of 'mastery' in mathematics. During the inspection, we observed pupils using a range of mathematical resources, which they could manipulate to aid their understanding of key concepts.
- Work in pupils' books and school tracking information show that pupils in the

current Year 6 have made good progress this year. The proportions identified as on track to reach age-related expectations are above those seen nationally last year. The proportions expected to exceed age-related expectations are less secure and this is something that you have already identified as a priority. Differences between the attainment of girls and boys are diminishing.

- I had a line of enquiry relating to achievement by the end of key stage 1 because the proportions of pupils who met age-related expectations in reading, writing and mathematics in 2016 were below that seen nationally. The strong outcomes in the Year 1 phonics check were not reflected in reading outcomes at the end of Year 2 in 2016. I wanted to check how good progress and attainment are currently in key stage 1 and whether pupils who did not meet the age-related expectations by the end of Year 2 last year have caught up in Year 3.
- Previously, pupils did not have regular opportunities to develop their skills of comprehension through inferring meaning from texts. They now have these, due to better and more structured teaching of reading. Consequently, key stage 1 pupils are becoming more confident and competent in all aspects of their reading.
- In mathematics lessons, pupils enjoy using resources and these help them to develop their understanding of key concepts and to work out answers to questions.
- In both Year 1 and Year 2, pupils are benefiting from more regular opportunities to write at length and because of this they are making good progress in their writing.
- The work in pupils' books supports the school's monitoring information, which shows that a higher proportion are on track to reach age-related expectations at the end of Year 2 this year. There is also evidence that more pupils are working at greater depth. Those currently in Year 3 have made good progress since the end of Year 2 and most are meeting the end-of-year standards.
- My final line of enquiry related to the progress that disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are making. This is because they did not make good progress across key stage 2. You have reviewed how the additional funding received for the pupils is spent. Each pupil has an individual action plan tailored to their needs both within and outside school.
- Meetings to check the progress of all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are held regularly and more focused support is now put in place for any who are falling behind. The impact of these actions is closely monitored to ensure that leaders know how effective they are. Your school's tracking information shows, and work in pupils' books confirms, that each group of pupils is making better progress across the school because of these actions.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the quality of teaching and learning in reading, writing and mathematics is consistently high
- the most able pupils are consistently challenged to reach the higher standards by the end of key stage 2
- teachers' expectations of the quality of pupils' writing and presentation are consistently high in all subjects so that pupils apply their English skills well when writing in other subjects.

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

Joan Beale
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, all teachers and two members of the governing body. I met subject leaders and middle leaders, and had a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority. I looked at the work in pupils' books and listened to pupils read. I also looked in detail at the work in books of pupils in Years 2, 3 and 6. I spoke with pupils formally and informally during breaktimes and in lessons. We visited classrooms together to observe teaching and learning.

I scrutinised safeguarding policies and practice. I considered a wide range of documentation, including the school's own evaluation, plans for improvement and external monitoring reports.

I took account of 28 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and 24 written comments, and spoke with 13 parents when they were collecting their children from school. I also considered a letter from one parent and the results of the school's own recent parental survey.