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Ms Louise George
Headteacher
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Dear Ms George

Short inspection of Walford Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 27 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 May 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, other leaders and governors have worked with dynamism, determination and commitment to make sure that the school has continued to move forwards and to build on its many strengths and successes. As a result, the quality of teaching and learning has been further strengthened and outcomes for pupils have improved, especially in the early years and key stage 1. For the past two years, the school's results at the end of the Reception Year, in the phonics screening check and in the national assessments for seven-year-olds, have been well above those seen nationally. Taken overall, outcomes at the end of key stage 2 have also remained above average. Your current assessments show that this is set to continue.

Walford is a warm, open and friendly place. Parents who spoke to me at the start of the day and those who commented online were unanimous in saying that their children are happy and enjoy school, so much so that they want to come on Saturdays too. They say that this is because you and the staff know each and every child very well. 'They know what makes them tick,' said one. Another parent accurately summed up your approach, saying, 'All things, not just academic achievement, are valued and given time – music, dance, sports, hobbies and talents. My child has received a fantastic, all-round primary education.' Parents also said that they feel welcome in school and that they can raise matters with you or other staff members at any time.

Relationships between adults, between adults and pupils and between pupils themselves are strong. Parents of children in Reception spoke highly of the 'buddy' system, where pupils in Years 5 and 6 are partnered with the very youngest pupils, looking out for them throughout the school day. Pupils have many chances to take responsibility and to act as leaders. Your pupils are friendly, well-mannered and respectful. In class, they are keen to learn and responsive to their teachers.

Since the last inspection, you have fostered and enhanced the skills and talents of the staff team. Your staff have a high degree of expertise. Some are specialist leaders of education, including in English, and early years. The deputy headteacher is a primary teaching for mastery specialist and other staff act as assessment moderators for the local authority. The school is also a regional training centre for tablet technology. Your coordinator for special educational needs has attained the national award and the chair of governors is a national leader of governance. You have built a strong and supportive team of staff, but you are by no means insular. Walford is an outward-looking school and you are more than willing to share your knowledge and expertise with other schools both within Herefordshire and out of county.

The wider curriculum is organised into topics that link subjects together in imaginative ways. This excites pupils' curiosity and enthusiasm. Work in pupils' topic books is well presented and of high quality. You offer a wide range of clubs and activities, including residential experiences that enhance the curriculum and broaden pupils' horizons. The school building and the learning environment both in classrooms and outdoors are immaculate. Classrooms and corridors support and celebrate pupils' learning. Everywhere is clean, bright and inviting. It is clear that the site manager is very much a valued member of the staff team.

You, other leaders and governors have a secure understanding of what is working well and know where further work is needed. Your self-evaluation is honest and accurate. The key lines of enquiry for this inspection and the areas for improvement came as no surprise to you.

At the previous inspection, you were asked to ensure that pupils made even faster progress, by making sure that teachers' expectations were always of the highest order and that pupils were fully challenged by their work. You were also asked to make sure that teachers give pupils scope to use their initiative. You have dealt with these areas successfully. Pupils' progress across the school has improved. Pupils in the early years and key stage 1 in particular make swift progress and typically attain high standards. You are confident that staff follow the school's approach to marking. You emphasise the development of pupils' learning behaviours, including confidence, resilience and initiative.

Safeguarding is effective.

You, other leaders and governors have established a strong safeguarding culture at Walford Primary School. You have made sure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose, and that the records you keep are detailed and of high quality.

You provide annual training for staff at all levels, backed up by regular bulletins that ensure that safeguarding remains at the forefront of everyone's minds. Staff understand the need to be vigilant and know what they must do if they have concerns. Your records show that when staff bring issues to your attention you make informed and appropriate decisions about the next steps. Pupils' welfare is a key priority for you. Should you have concerns, you and other staff work closely with the local authority and outside agencies where necessary, to ensure that children's needs are assessed and met and that they are kept safe.

Procedures for the recruitment of staff and for checking their suitability to work with children are robust. Governors check the school's procedures and the single central record of recruitment and vetting checks, and receive regular updates.

Parents, staff and pupils agree that pupils are kept safe at school. In assemblies, lessons in personal, social and health education and through special events, pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe and deal with potential risks they may face. This includes both in the rural environment in which many live and when using the internet. You make sure that staff read and understand the school's code of conduct and abide by their responsibilities when using social media, for example.

The school occupies a large site, bounded by countryside. You have carefully assessed the risks that this could pose. You make sure that pupils are appropriately supervised at all times on the playground and school field.

Inspection findings

- Your self-evaluation rightly identifies that in the past, pupils' progress in mathematics has not matched that seen in reading and writing. The deputy headteacher, who is subject leader and a specialist teacher of mathematics, has provided training and support for staff members. This has strengthened their subject knowledge. It has also made sure that they understand and implement the requirements of the new national curriculum for mathematics, including the need to deepen pupils' knowledge and to be able to explain their thinking and reasoning. In order to support pupils' concentration, mathematics lessons are organised so that there is a break part way through. You have returned to whole-class teaching and all pupils have the opportunity to work on tasks that are suitably challenging.
- Your current assessments and the work in pupils' books show that pupils are building well on their prior attainment. The assessments show that achievement in mathematics now matches that in English.
- Pupils clearly enjoy their mathematics lessons. During the inspection, pupils persevered with challenging problems and checked their work to make sure answers were accurate. Pupils are confident to explain what they are doing and to justify their ideas. Pupils in one class discussed the different properties of a rhombus and a kite. They put forward their ideas maturely and with confidence, listening to one another attentively.
- The subject leader plans to provide further training and support to make sure

that teaching in mathematics is consistently of the highest quality and the new approaches are firmly embedded.

- Although all pupils do well at Walford, there are differences in the achievement of boys and girls. Boys achieve well, and some attain highly, but girls typically attain more highly than boys. This is the case in classes where there are more boys than girls, as well as where girls outnumber boys.
- In order to boost boys' achievement, you track carefully the progress of every pupil and take action to make sure that no one falls behind. The changes to the organisation of mathematics lessons mentioned above have helped boys sustain their concentration. Teachers make sure to choose topics that excite the interest of boys. You also make sure that boys are physically active – all have the chance to run a mile a day at the end of lunchtime, for example.
- Your current assessments show signs of improvement but there is a mixed picture. There is no substantial difference between the achievement of boys and girls at the end of key stage 1; all pupils have achieved well. Boys have done better than girls in this year's phonics screening check with every boy attaining the expected standard. In the early years, the proportion of boys who have attained a good level of development this year is above that seen nationally last year. However, the girls have done even better. Similarly, at the end of key stage 2, while the proportions of boys and girls attaining the expected standard are broadly similar, more girls than boys have been assessed as working at greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The attendance of pupils who were receiving support for their special educational needs and/or disabilities last year was not as good as that of other pupils. Your records indicate that this was because of the particular medical needs of a small number of pupils. However, current figures show that overall attendance is above last year's national figure. No group of pupils is disadvantaged because of poor attendance.
- I pointed out at the start of the inspection that some required items were missing from the school's website. The items had been revised and were in the process of being uploaded following amendments. This was completed by the end of the inspection. As part of its review of the school's work, the governing body checks that the school's website complies with the Department for Education's requirements.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to strive to boost the achievement of boys so that it matches that of girls – leaders should take steps to identify and implement further strategies to motivate boys to do even better
- they implement plans for further training and support for the teaching of mathematics.

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

Yours sincerely

Linda McGill
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

At the start of the inspection, I toured the school with you, visiting every classroom and meeting members of staff. I spoke to several parents in the playground. I met with you and the deputy headteacher to discuss the school's self-evaluation, your current priorities and to agree the areas of focus for the inspection.

I visited classrooms from Reception to Year 6 to observe teaching and learning in mathematics, talking informally with pupils about their work and looking at their books. I met with the chair of the governing body and the vice-chair. I had telephone conversations with a representative of the local authority and your school improvement partner. I discussed the school's approach to safeguarding with you. I also scrutinised the school's record of recruitment and vetting checks and other documents relating to safeguarding. I looked at the range of displays in classrooms, corridors and around the school, and looked at work in pupils' topic books. I examined documents, including the school's self-evaluation, assessment information and information on the school's website. I took account of the 41 responses made by parents on the Parent View website, including free-text comments. I also examined the views of the 18 members of staff and 21 pupils who completed online questionnaires.