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Mrs Jules Hall
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Hall

Short inspection of Whitley Abbey Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 12 July 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 October 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. There has, however, been a considerable change of teaching staff and leaders within the school since 2012. You have stabilised this and are leading improvements at a rapid rate.

Since you were appointed as acting headteacher in September 2016 and then permanent headteacher in January 2017, the school has regained its focus. As one staff member put it, 'Our school has started to thrive again.' You have made significant improvements in assessing and analysing pupils' progress. This has given you, your staff and governors an accurate view of how well the school is doing. Collectively, you have a clear picture of where strengths lie and have set a clear direction for further improvement.

You have established a happy and welcoming ethos within the school. You are ably assisted by a united and supportive team. All adults play a key role in promoting a good standard of education for pupils and providing high levels of nurture and support. Carefully tailored provision is provided for individuals and groups. This ensures that they achieve well. Pupils enjoy school, attend regularly and feel safe. Parents, staff and pupils have very positive views of the school. Typical comments made by parents include, 'A first class community school with a first-class leadership and teaching team.'

You have partially addressed the key issues raised at the previous inspection. Marking and feedback processes are implemented consistently across the school in accordance with the school's policy. Achievement has risen steadily in the early years, and key stage 1 results have been consistently in line with, or above, the national average. However, while boys make the same rates of progress as girls, girls still attain better than boys in both of these key stages, and also in key stage 2 in reading, writing and mathematics. There remains further work to do, therefore, in raising the attainment of boys across the school.

Pupils use good vocabulary and imaginative ideas in their writing, but their grammar, punctuation and spelling skills need further development. Weaknesses in these aspects limit the quality and accuracy of pupils' writing. In mathematics, pupils are provided with lots of problem-solving opportunities to apply the skills they have been taught. However, they are not adept at reasoning or explaining the methods they use. This prevents some pupils from reaching greater depth.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. As the designated safeguarding leader, you ensure that pupils' safety is taken seriously and given high priority. All staff and governors have received relevant training, including in preventing extremism and radicalisation. As a result, staff have a clear understanding of what steps to take if they have a concern about a pupil. You seek advice or make referrals to external agencies, as and when appropriate, and record actions taken. Due diligence is shown by you and governors when appointing staff to make sure that they are suitably qualified and suitable to work with children.

Pupils feel safe and have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe. E-safety ambassadors ensure that pupils are aware of the potential dangers of using the internet. Regular assemblies, lessons and visitors help pupils develop their awareness of personal safety. The 'worry bags' provided in all classrooms enable pupils to share any problems or concerns discreetly. Pupils feel confident that their concerns will be listened to because they have good relationships with staff. Pupils have a highly developed understanding of what bullying is. The school message of, 'Is it rude, is it mean, or is it bullying?' is well embedded and fully understood by pupils. It helps them discern between unkind behaviour and real bullying. All parents who responded to Parent View said that their children feel safe in school.

Inspection findings

- At the beginning of the inspection, we agreed the key lines of enquiry to be considered during the day. One area of focus was the effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels, including middle leaders and governors. This was chosen because some members of the governing body and some staff leaders were newly appointed this year. Inspection evidence found that self-evaluation is honest and accurate. This is because you have sharpened the assessment system in use. Data collected is carefully analysed to identify which pupils need

additional support. Provision is then closely matched to pupils' needs. As a result, all leaders have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses within the school and how well different cohorts and groups of pupils are achieving. School action plans are focused on tackling any weaknesses identified to improve provision and achievement further.

- You and your leadership team also monitor the quality of teaching rigorously. Subject and phase leaders provide good levels of support for colleagues, including those who are newly qualified, to ensure that teaching remains good across the school. Effective feedback is provided for staff to ensure that they know how to improve their teaching. Leaders also work in close collaboration with other local schools to share good practice and check that assessment levels awarded for pupils' work are reliable and accurate.
- Governors provide a good balance of challenge and support for the school. They have a good awareness of current key priorities because they are involved in the formulation of school development plans. They visit school when they can to have lunch with the pupils or hear children read. This shows their level of dedication and commitment. Governors have a good understanding of the attainment of different groups and cohorts. They meet regularly with leaders and also receive presentations from subject and phase leaders at meetings. This gives them a wider body of information. Governors take their statutory responsibilities seriously and ensure that safeguarding, finance and curriculum duties are fully met.
- A second area we focused on was the attainment of children on entry to the school and the achievement of boys. Inspection evidence shows that the starting points for boys are generally lower than those for girls, especially in speaking, reading and fine motor control. However, provision is good, and boys do make good progress from their lower starting points. Teachers plan imaginative activities and make good use of the outdoors to help engage boys, for example going on a ladybird hunt. They also provide as many opportunities as possible to promote writing skills, for example encouraging boys to write sentences about the construction models they have built, or writing and posting invitations to their parents for open day. However, the proportion of boys reaching a good level of development remains below the national average and below girls.
- We also discussed and explored how well reading is taught, especially for boys, both in phonics in key stage 1 and in guided reading in key stage 2. This was because you have focused on this as a whole-school issue this year and historical results showed reading progress in key stage 2 to be weaker than writing and mathematics. You and your team have tackled this priority successfully. Actions taken include greater parental involvement, reading competitions, new boy-friendly reading material, World Book Day, parent workshops, afternoon reading sessions and school library visits for all classes. Pupils use their phonic skills well to help them with new and unfamiliar words. The impact of the actions taken are clear: 72% of boys reached the level required in the Year 1 phonics check in 2017 compared to only 52% in 2016. Also, a higher proportion of pupils reached the levels expected and greater depth at the end of Year 6 in reading in 2017. More pupils now read regularly and for pleasure.

- A further line of enquiry was based on the achievement of the most able pupils in writing and mathematics. This is because published information shows that they do not make consistently good progress and too few pupils demonstrate that they are working at greater depth in current year groups. Evidence in pupils' books shows that the most able pupils make good progress across the year. They develop more sophisticated language skills and learn to apply different language structures successfully. However, weaknesses remain in some of their use of grammar, punctuation and spelling. This issue is not, however, isolated to the most able pupils, as other pupils also demonstrate a weakness in this area. Pupils do not use the higher-order skills well and, as a result, the quality and accuracy of their written work are impaired. Similarly, the most able pupils do not have a good grasp of some mathematical concepts. While pupils in key stage 2 are challenged well in mathematics, their reasoning skills and ability to explain their answers are not yet fully developed. This again limits their ability to work at greater depth.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that teaching:

- raises the attainment of boys so that they attain at least as well as girls and differences are diminished across the school
- develops the accuracy of pupils' grammar, punctuation and spelling to improve the quality of their writing for all ability groups
- enhances pupils' reasoning skills in mathematics so that a higher proportion can achieve at a 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 Coventry. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Heather Simpson
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and members of your leadership team, representatives of the governing body and the school's local authority adviser. I discussed the work of the school with all leaders, including the achievement of pupils and procedures in place for safeguarding. Together, we visited several classrooms, spoke with pupils about their learning and looked at the work in their books. I listened to pupils read and observed reading being taught in key stages 1 and 2. I talked with pupils at lunchtime to gather their views about the school.

I looked at a range of school documents, including information about the quality of training, staff development and pupil achievement. I also reviewed the school's own evaluation of its work, together with the school development plan. I took account of the 31 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the school's own parent survey. Additional information was collected from parents at the end of the school day. There were 19 responses to the staff questionnaire and 20 responses to the pupil questionnaire. All views were fully considered.