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18 September 2017

Mrs Rowe
Headteacher
How Wood Primary and Nursery School
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Dear Mrs Rowe

Short inspection of How Wood Primary and Nursery School

Following my visit to the school on 13 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 September 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You were appointed as headteacher in September 2016. You quickly identified areas for improvement and have taken incisive action to address these to ensure that the school remains good.

How Wood provides a warm, caring, happy, safe and stimulating environment in which pupils thrive both academically and personally. The school motto of 'learning together, achieving together, happy together, forward together' runs through all aspects of school life. During the inspection, all pupils were involved in 'transition day' and were being taught by the teachers who would be taking them in September. All showed clear enjoyment of the activities that teachers had planned for them around a theme of personal, health and social education. They were very comfortable with their new teachers, responding enthusiastically and readily and behaving impeccably.

You are providing strong and purposeful leadership. Your clear leadership of learning is providing direction for teachers and good opportunities for professional development. As a result, teaching is consistently good and there is some outstanding practice. Across the school, different groups of pupils are making good progress and achieving well in a range of subjects, including English and mathematics.

Pupils told me how much they enjoyed school and appreciated their teachers. One commented, 'Teachers are good at helping us and making us understand in a fun way.' Relationships between pupils and with teachers are highly positive. Pupils were pleased to talk to me about their work and demonstrated a clear sense of pride in this. The work in their books is neat and very well presented in all subjects. Pupils also enjoy the range of clubs and sporting opportunities which the school offers them. Year 6 pupils act as play leaders to younger pupils, which helps to ensure that all pupils in the school community know each other and contributes to them all getting on very well.

How Wood is highly regarded by parents and this is reflected in their overwhelmingly positive comments on Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. Parents spoken to, and one who wrote to me, were also effusive in their comments about the school and your leadership. One commented, 'Now that Mrs Rowe is here it is fantastic; she is brilliant!'

You have accurately evaluated the school's strengths and areas for improvement and demonstrated the capacity to make improvements successfully. You have ensured that the new leaders of mathematics and English have benefited from appropriate training, both from yourself and through support from local authority advisers. These leaders have, in turn, provided training for all staff to support them in implementing new approaches to their teaching.

Clear plans for further improvement are accurate and identify appropriate actions to ensure that the improvements that you have made are built upon and sustained. For example, you have identified that you need to improve outcomes in reading at key stage 2 further. You have also identified that improving the standard of pupils' spelling across the school is a priority.

Governors have supported you effectively in introducing new initiatives since your arrival. They visit the school regularly and have good systems in place to ensure that they are well informed. They use the school improvement plan, reports from the local authority and your headteacher 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.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders ensure that all statutory duties related to safeguarding are fulfilled. There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Checks on the suitability of staff to work with children are meticulous, as are arrangements for their recruitment. Staff have received all relevant safeguarding training. Senior leaders regularly check everyone's understanding and know which aspects of safeguarding need to be revisited. As a result, all staff are fully aware of what to do if they have concerns about any aspects of pupils' welfare.

Any concerns are dealt with swiftly and efficiently. All records are thorough and well maintained. Detailed notes are also kept of any minor aspects of name-calling or bullying. Any such incidents are followed up quickly and efficiently and dealt with effectively. Pupils reported that bullying is very rare but that if it does occur it is always dealt with swiftly and resolved. They are confident that if they have any concerns at all that staff will sort these out. A very small minority of parents said that they were not pleased with the way that the school followed up allegations of bullying. However, no evidence was found that concerns are not fully investigated.

Inspection findings

- To ascertain that the school remained good, I considered several lines of enquiry. The first of these was about attendance. This was an area for improvement from the previous inspection report. Also, published information from 2016 showed that particular groups of pupils had absence and persistent absence rates that were much higher than was the case nationally. These included disadvantaged pupils and those who had special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Discussion with leaders and detailed scrutiny of records and attendance figures satisfied me that attendance across the school has improved. This includes that of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. There are rigorous procedures in place to monitor attendance. You provided case studies of individual pupils with previously high persistent absence and details of your actions to improve this. It is evident that the school takes the right actions to encourage good attendance.
- My second line of enquiry was concerned with pupils' attainment and progress. I wanted to find out how well pupils in key stage 2 were achieving in writing and reading because too few of them achieved at the higher standards in these subjects in the 2016 tests. Also, the progress of a few pupils in writing from the end of key stage 1 to the end of key stage 2 was too low. I also wanted to find out how well pupils in key stage 1 were doing in writing because teacher assessments for 2016 were below those seen nationally and below those for reading and mathematics. I further wanted to explore differences in outcomes between boys and girls in writing at both key stages.
- The most recent information for 2017 shows many improvements. At the end of key stage 2, the proportions of pupils who achieved the higher standards for reading and writing have improved since 2016 and are above the provisional national figure for 2017. At key stage 1, there have been improvements in writing and the proportion of pupils achieving both the expected standard and greater depth are now above the provisional 2017 national figure. The most recent school information also shows that differences between the achievement of boys and girls in writing have diminished considerably.
- You are disappointed that improvements in reading in 2017 are not quite as good as those for writing and mathematics. However, you have identified appropriate actions to take to strengthen reading further across the school. Although pupils' handwriting is neat and many of them write with good structure, flair and creativity, too many pupils have inaccuracies in spelling. We discussed the steps that you have already taken to improve spelling and your plans to improve this

still further and to encourage more parents to become engaged in supporting their children's spelling.

- During the inspection, we looked at pupils' work in all year groups in a variety of books, including English and mathematics. You also shared school tracking information with me. Both clearly show that all current groups of pupils are making good progress across the school and many are making accelerated progress. The quality of pupils' writing in all subjects is equally good. There are developing opportunities for them to apply their mathematical skills in other subjects and clear evidence that there are good opportunities to develop their reasoning skills.
- My third line of enquiry was about improvements since the previous inspection. This had identified a number of areas to improve including strengthening teaching, assessment and learning; improving the quality of outdoor learning in the early years; and improving attendance.
- Effective professional development this year, with a focus on improving writing and mathematics, has had a positive impact. Teaching across the school is consistently good. Pupils in the early years benefit from a spacious outdoor learning environment, which provides well for all areas of learning. The proportions of children achieving a good level of development show year-on-year improvement. The school has made good progress since the previous inspection and addressed all identified areas for improvement.
- My final line of enquiry was about the effectiveness of the school's use of the pupil premium grant to ensure that the small number of disadvantaged pupils who attend the school achieve well. Past results showed differences between their progress and others nationally with similar starting points at both key stage 1 and key stage 2. You presented school tracking information and an analysis of this year's test results at both key stages which show that these differences have diminished considerably. Work in the books of these pupils also shows that they are currently making good progress.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- recently introduced strategies for teaching English and mathematics are built upon so that the improvements seen in 2017 are sustained
- plans to improve attainment in reading at the end of key stage 2 are swiftly implemented and identified pupils receive appropriate opportunities to develop their skills
- the accuracy of pupils' spelling across the school improves as a result of:
 - consistent implementation of the new scheme for teaching spelling
 - engaging parents further in improving their children's spelling.

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

I met with you, all teachers and four members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. I also met subject leaders and a representative from the local authority. I spoke with pupils formally, at breaktimes and in lessons. We visited all classrooms together to observe teaching and learning and looked at the work in pupils' books in a range of subjects. I scrutinised safeguarding policies and practice. I considered a wide range of other documentation, including the school's own evaluation and plans for improvement and external monitoring reports. I took account of 101 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and 23 comments received electronically, and spoke with 13 parents when they were delivering their children to school. I also considered a letter from one parent. I further analysed 31 responses from the pupil questionnaire and 13 responses to the staff questionnaire.