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Dear Ms Gilbert

Short inspection of Westfield School

Following my visit to the school on 11 October 2017 with Rowena Green, Ofsted Inspector, 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 March 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Westfield is a friendly and welcoming school. Staff greet pupils warmly at the start of the day. Pupils come in cheerfully, despite the long journeys that some have. The atmosphere in school is calm and orderly. Relationships between staff and pupils are strong. Staff are kind and supportive of the pupils and the climate in lessons and around the school is positive. Pupils willingly get on with their tasks in lessons. They behave well and respond readily to the adults who work with them. At breaktimes, pupils play happily with one another and with adults.

You work closely and effectively with other leaders, governors and external partners to make sure that all aspects of the school's work are carefully checked. Consequently, you and the governing body have a clear picture of what is working well and where further work is needed. Your self-evaluation is accurate and honest. Your plan for development is strategic and focused on important areas. It sets out your goals in the short and longer term. You track progress towards your goals regularly to make sure there is no slippage and that actions are having the desired impact. You and the staff are reflective practitioners who are open to change. You are willing to learn from others and are happy to share your expertise with them.

The parents who spoke to me and my colleague at the start of the day and those who completed the online questionnaire were all highly pleased with the school. Your own questionnaire results confirm these opinions. Parents said how much their

children enjoy coming to Westfield. They particularly value the way that teachers and support staff help their children to make progress in learning as well as supporting their personal and social development. 'The teachers and staff are outstanding and they always do everything they can to help support our son and keep us informed of his progress,' said one.

The curriculum is carefully organised so that pupils learn the skills and knowledge they need through relevant topics that interest and engage them. Staff seize chances to reinforce what pupils have learned in one subject in other lessons. In a physical education lesson, for example, pupils tried hard to improve the accuracy of their throwing, with some success. They knew they had got better, because they were encouraged to count exactly how many bean bags landed in a hoop. A cooking activity helped deepen pupils' understanding in mathematics and reading, and helped develop their fine motor skills.

You have developed an effective system for planning to meet the needs of individual pupils and for assessing how much progress they make. Teachers start by considering what the pupils need to learn next. In lessons, teachers plan tasks and activities that are carefully matched to the prior learning of each pupil. Your 'learning ladders' make sure that all staff have a clear understanding of what pupils are working towards. Both teachers and support staff contribute to assessments. You have also worked with other special schools to make sure that teachers fully understand what small steps of progress look like.

You have successfully dealt with the areas for improvement highlighted in your last inspection report. You keep detailed records of monitoring of teaching and learning. These records show that you give helpful feedback to individuals and support them in improving their practice, where needed. This has brought greater consistency to the way staff implement the school's agreed approaches to teaching. For example, the way staff use signs and symbols to aid pupils' communication skills has been strengthened.

Pupils who have more complex needs are taught in a separate room that has been adapted to support them in their learning. They have their own outdoor space. Staff know the pupils well and understand their preferred styles of learning. For example, they make sure to give pupils plenty of time to think about what they have been asked before they are expected to respond. There are clear structures and systems that help pupils to understand routines and be ready to learn. The approach is highly personalised.

Your school's website is well organised and easy to navigate. However, not all the required information is included. The impact of spending of the primary physical education and sports funding is missing, for example. There is no link to the Department for Education's performance tables. In addition, although there is no requirement to publish such information, we talked about the possibility of publishing a summary of what your pupils achieve, such as their entry level qualifications and vocational qualifications, on the website. This could help to share the extent of their achievements with a wider audience.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong safeguarding culture at Westfield. Your policy is detailed and highly relevant, taking full account of the extra vigilance that is required when working with pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Importantly, through regular training, you make sure that staff know and understand what the policy includes and what they must do should they have a concern. You and the governing body have made sure that all safeguarding arrangements, including the way that staff are recruited and their suitability checked, are fit for purpose. Your online reporting system helps you make sure that records are detailed, well organised and of high quality. You are tenacious in following up issues with local authorities where necessary.

Your curriculum emphasises the need to teach pupils to understand risk and how to keep themselves safe. Parents and staff agree that pupils are kept safe at school and are well looked after.

Inspection findings

- Your assessment information shows that most pupils are making good or better progress in reading, writing, number and measurement. Boys and girls make progress at a similar rate. There are no marked differences in the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and others. The main reasons for any differences in progress are the different circumstances and the varying needs of each year group. You spend pupil premium funding appropriately, including on activities that support pupils' personal development as well as their progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- You set ambitious targets for all pupils, based on what they can do already and projected forwards to the end of each key stage. You make sure that teachers understand clearly what is expected for each pupil in their class. Progress towards the targets is regularly checked. Teachers are helped to adjust their teaching should any pupils appear to be falling behind.
- You summarise and evaluate the progress of different groups of pupils. You present the information to the governing body in a format that is easily readable. Governors can see the main messages at a glance. Consequently, they ask pertinent questions and seek clarification where they need to. You know that lower attendance has an adverse impact on individual pupils' learning, but you have not looked at the overall impact in the same way as you have looked at the differences in achievement between boys and girls, for example. Carrying out such an evaluation would help you, governors and parents to see clearly the difference in progress between those pupils whose attendance is good and those who are frequently absent.
- You have made sure that the considerable strengths of the sixth-form provision have been sustained. Leadership of the sixth form is strong and the staff work closely and effectively together. Each pupil follows a personalised curriculum that builds on what they can do already and sets out a pathway towards their aspirations for life after school.

- The curriculum in the sixth form emphasises the further development of pupils' skills in English, mathematics and computing. Pupils are entered for, and achieve, entry level qualifications in these subjects when they are ready. Pupils study for a wide range of vocational qualifications that reflect their ambitions and broaden their horizons. They also undertake relevant work experience in the local community.
- You place an equally strong emphasis on making sure that pupils' personal development is supported and that they are well prepared for their next steps in the wider world, including for independent living. Enterprise activities teach pupils how to budget and manage money. Pupils learn how to travel independently. The sixth form residential experience boosts pupils' self-esteem and confidence. Transition to college or apprenticeship is well managed. All pupils who left in 2016 and 2017 are still attending their placements. One parent expressed pride at how much her son had achieved and her pleasure at seeing him leave Westfield as a 'well-rounded young man'.
- You continue to strive to improve attendance. Your target is to make sure that Westfield's attendance rate matches that of mainstream schools. You emphasise the importance of good attendance in every newsletter and make sure to praise the class with the best attendance each week. You also offer practical support, such as help with transport, to parents should they need it. Your efforts have met with some success and attendance for some individuals has improved markedly. You have also successfully reduced the proportion of pupils whose attendance falls below 90%. However, other pupils struggle to improve their attendance and although the overall rate is improving, it is doing so slowly.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they evaluate and report on the effect that lower attendance has on pupils' achievement and use the information as a tool to drive further improvement in attendance
- they make sure that all the required information, including an evaluation of how effectively the primary physical education and sports funding has been spent, is published on the school's website.

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 day, the inspectors met with you and the deputy headteacher to discuss the school's self-evaluation and the areas of focus for the inspection. We met members of the staff group. We spoke to several parents as they brought their children to school and observed other pupils arriving by minibuses. During the day, we also talked with you about current assessment information, provision in the sixth form, attendance and the school's approach to safeguarding. I met the chair and vice-chair of the governing body.

We spent time in classrooms across the school, including the sixth form and the provision for pupils who have more complex needs. I scrutinised the school's record of recruitment and vetting checks and other documents relating to safeguarding. We looked at documents, including the plan for improvement, assessment information, and information on the school's website. I took account of the five responses made by parents on the Parent View website, including their free-text comments, and the results of the school's recent internal survey of parents' opinions. I also examined the views of 27 members of staff who completed questionnaires.