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Mrs Helen Murray
Head of School
Wickham Market Primary School
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Dear Mrs Murray

Short inspection of Wickham Market Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 10 October 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in February 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Although you only took up your post as head of school in September, you already have a very accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of your school. You know your pupils as individuals and greet them warmly by name. You understand and recognise what good teaching and learning look like in classrooms. When we observed teaching together, we identified the same strengths and areas for improvement throughout the school.

The school converted to become an academy on 1 November 2014, as part of the Avocet Multi-Academy Trust. You are supported well by the trust. The chief executive and the executive principal are directly involved in the school's leadership. For example, the executive principal is currently working alongside you as you establish yourself in your new role. Before the summer holiday, the trust's leaders put thorough transition arrangements in place to ensure that you could 'hit the ground running' at the start of the new academic year.

Pupils enjoy coming to school. They feel very well supported by staff and they like the challenges they are given in lessons. Pupils are polite and friendly. They behave well and follow the school's rules. Pupils show very good attitudes to equality and diversity. When discussing differences between people, such as skin colour, in a

meeting with me, one pupil said that the school teaches them that 'you don't judge a book by its cover'. Pupils know the difference between right and wrong and they know that leaders take matters seriously when someone behaves inappropriately.

Governors are dedicated and committed to their roles, frequently spending time in the school with staff and pupils. As a result, they know the school well and have a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. They are aware that they need to provide you and the other leaders with greater challenge, particularly around the spending of the pupil premium grant.

Although the quality of teaching is good overall, a small amount of weaker teaching remains. Where this is the case, pupils do not achieve as well as they could because expectations are not high enough and because the most able pupils are not challenged sufficiently. Although the teaching of phonics has improved, it is not yet consistently strong throughout the school. You have a very good understanding of where the stronger and weaker practice in the school lie. The school's executive leaders have a good track record of ensuring that weak teaching is not allowed to persist for long periods.

Safeguarding is effective.

The school takes its safeguarding responsibilities seriously and leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Procedures to ensure that only suitable people are employed to work with children are robust. The school's single central record of pre-employment checks is kept meticulously. A detailed checklist is used to ensure that no requirements are missed when checking the suitability of potential new staff.

You have been properly trained for your role as the school's designated safeguarding lead. You are supported well by other leaders who have also completed the necessary training. Thorough records are kept of child protection concerns. You are alert to the possibility of neglect and abuse, and take appropriate action to protect children when necessary. The chief executive summed up leaders' approach when discussing safeguarding issues and the importance of following up on pupils' absence by saying, 'The only thing you can't do is nothing.'

Pupils feel safe at school. They say that there is little bullying at Wickham Market Primary. They have been taught to 'tell an adult that you trust' if they are worried about bullying or have any other concerns. Pupils like and trust their teachers and teaching assistants and these strong relationships help to keep pupils safe.

Inspection findings

- In order to check that the school remains good, I looked at a number of lines of enquiry. Firstly, I explored teaching and leadership in mathematics and looked at whether current pupils are making good progress in the subject. I chose to look at this area because results of the key stage 2 national tests showed that the progress pupils made was below the national average in 2017, and their

attainment was also below average. This represented a dip in comparison to the 2016 national test results.

- You and the school's other leaders are fully aware of which are the weaker areas in mathematics. Carefully chosen assessments have been used to diagnose the areas of the mathematics curriculum where pupils achieve less well. For example, leaders have identified that pupils need to develop better reasoning skills and better strategies for answering word-based problems. You have also recognised that a lack of confidence and resilience affects some pupils' ability to persevere with and complete formal assessments.
- Leaders have introduced a structured programme to help pupils to improve their stamina, become more confident in their learning and be better able to cope with getting things wrong. You have found that this is working well and pupils are starting to show improved attitudes. Teachers have also introduced more opportunities for pupils to develop their reasoning skills. Current pupils are making good progress in mathematics throughout the school.
- My second line of enquiry was to check whether disadvantaged pupils achieve as well as they should and whether the pupil premium grant is used to maximum effect. I chose to look at this area because, although disadvantaged pupils made similar progress to other pupils, their attainment in the key stage 2 national tests has been below average for the last two years.
- The pupil premium funding is used in a variety of appropriate ways. For example, the trust's intervention teacher works with small groups of pupils to help them with the elements of English and mathematics that they struggle with. She also works with the most able pupils to extend and develop their thinking and understanding. Leaders monitor the progress disadvantaged pupils make. Throughout the school, disadvantaged pupils are making at least the expected progress, with some making better progress.
- Too few disadvantaged pupils are making the very rapid progress necessary from their lower starting points for differences in attainment between them and non-disadvantaged pupils to be diminished. The link between the spending of pupil premium funding and an expectation of rapid progress for disadvantaged pupils is not explicit enough. Governors do not hold leaders fully to account to ensure that the pupil premium grant is used to maximum effect.
- The next area that I looked at was the supervision of pupils and the suitability of the school's outdoor areas. This is because I was aware of a qualifying complaint when planning this inspection. I did not investigate the complaint itself but, instead, checked whether the complaint raised wider concerns.
- The school is set in large and attractive grounds. Pupils have access to a range of outdoor areas, including a playground, a large field and a garden area. Children in the Nursery and Reception classes each have access to their own outdoor areas. The building and grounds are well maintained and suitable for their purpose. Pupils are suitably supervised during break and lesson times. I found no evidence of any wider concerns in this area.
- The final area that I explored concerned attendance. I looked at the measures leaders are taking to improve the attendance of various groups of pupils and

whether those measures are working. This is because, in the past, although attendance overall has been better than the national average, disadvantaged pupils, girls and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities did not attend as regularly as they should.

- Leaders take attendance very seriously. A range of suitable actions are taken, both to improve attendance and to tackle absence when it occurs. The vast majority of pupils attend school regularly and on time. No groups of pupils are disadvantaged by low attendance.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- increase the proportion of disadvantaged pupils who make very rapid progress so that differences in attainment between them and non-disadvantaged pupils are diminished
- raise teachers' expectations of what pupils can do by improving phonics teaching and ensuring that there is always sufficient challenge for the most able pupils.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the chief executive and the executive principal of Avocet Academy Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Suffolk. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Wendy Varney
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, other senior leaders and a group of governors. I met with a group of pupils and spoke with other pupils during the day. I took into account the 16 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. I observed teaching and learning, jointly with you, throughout the school and looked at pupils' exercise books. I scrutinised a range of school documents.