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Mr Dave Walton
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Dear Mr Walton

Short inspection of Woodham Ley Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 17 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 the school was judged to be good in June 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. You and your leadership team have built a strong school community. Governors and staff share your passion for making a positive impact on pupils' lives. As a result, pupils learn in a caring and highly supportive environment. The character of the school is summed up by the following parental comment: 'A lovely school with a real community feel with staff, parents and pupils who look after each other.' Leadership and management are highly effective in continuing to improve the school.

The heart of the school's work centres on your drive to ensure that all pupils, whatever their background, succeed academically and become responsible and caring young people. End of key stage 2 results have been above average for the past two years. A clear set of school rules based on the right to learn, the right to respect and the right to safety are understood and followed by pupils in the school. Adults and pupils are respectful towards one another. Pupils are attentive, enthusiastic learners who take pride in their work and are keen to make good progress. Pupils' behaviour in class and around the school remains exemplary.

There have been many changes in the school since the previous inspection. The school has joined the Robus multi-academy trust. The collaborative working with other schools in the trust has enabled you to share good practice, for example, in

teaching and in the assessment of pupils' work.

The onsite pre-school is now part of the school. As a result, staff expectations of what children can do and the quality of teaching in both the Nursery and Reception are now of the same high standard. For example, children in the Nursery now learn phonics. The classrooms and outdoor areas are stimulating and well resourced, and children benefit from a wide range of interesting learning activities. As a result, they are highly engaged in their learning. Adults use questioning highly effectively to test children's understanding and move their learning forward. Children are happy, work well together and enjoy their learning. Parents are provided with a range of opportunities to become involved in their child's learning. Parents are very positive about their children's experiences and commented on how happy they are in school. The greater consistency in practice across the early years has resulted in standards rising. The proportion of children leaving the early years having reached the expected standards remains above average.

Senior leaders and governors have an accurate understanding of standards in the school. This is because you analyse strengths and weaknesses in pupil progress and in the quality of teaching and assessment. You also evaluate the impact of the actions that you take to improve standards. At the previous inspection, you were asked to raise attainment in mathematics by providing pupils with more opportunities to solve problems. Work in pupils' books indicates that pupils are given opportunities to develop their reasoning skills by solving a range of different mathematical problems. As a result, pupils across the school are now making good progress.

Pupils follow a broad and balanced curriculum, which is studied through a range of interesting topics. Pupils have the opportunity to use their English and mathematical skills in different contexts. We looked at a range of pupils' work in subjects such as science and geography and found that the quality of learning and outcomes is not as high as it is in English and mathematics. We agreed that this is an area of improvement for the school.

The curriculum makes good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through trips, after-school clubs, sporting events and competitions. Classrooms provide an orderly and vibrant learning environment. Relationships between pupils and adults are good.

Safeguarding is effective.

You ensure that all the necessary checks are in place before an adult starts working or volunteering at the school. You, the governors and business manager ensure that safe recruitment practices are meticulously followed.

You have made sure that all staff are appropriately trained and aware of their duty to safeguard pupils. Staff are aware of the different types of abuse and know the signs to look out for. You make sure that all referrals are followed up with the appropriate agencies to ensure the best outcomes for pupils. Pupil records are

detailed and kept up to date. You provide effective support for vulnerable pupils and their families through the onsite support team.

Pupils are taught how to keep safe in a variety of situations, especially when using technology. You run safeguarding workshops for parents and pupils. The school's website keeps parents up to date with internet safety. Pupils I spoke to all said that they are safe in school because 'adults are there to help us' and 'we have a right to safety'.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection, I shared the areas of the school's work I intended to explore with you. The first related to pupils' progress in reading. I chose this because, although an above-average proportion of pupils left key stage 2 in 2017 having attained the expected standard, progress was below average, indicating that pupils did not achieve their full potential.
- You had already identified this as an area for improvement and were keen for me to look at the progress of current pupils. A thorough analysis of past test results in reading assisted leaders in identifying where pupils' performance was weakest. You found out that pupils could read well and by the time they were in Years 5 and 6 most pupils were fluent readers. However, pupils' understanding of the books they were reading was not sufficiently developed.
- As a result of your findings, you have changed the way you teach reading comprehension. We visited Year 5 to look at the impact of these changes. We found pupils reading challenging books, for example 'The Hound of the Baskervilles'. Teachers are setting interesting activities that allow pupils to explore the characters, story and vocabulary used in the book. Pupils told me that they enjoy these lessons because the books are interesting and the activities are fun. Evidence in lessons, pupils' books and the school's progress information indicate that you are taking appropriate actions to improve reading. You know that the changes have not yet had a full impact on improving progress for all year groups, as progress is currently stronger in key stage 1 than in upper key stage 2.
- The second area was related to how effectively the school is using the funds it receives to support disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The appointment of a new, highly skilled special educational needs coordinator has resulted in many improvements to the provision for pupils who have additional needs. Learning support assistants have received good-quality training, enabling them to provide pupils with good support. As a result of accurate progress information, pupils are provided with targeted support to help them catch up with their learning. Teachers have high expectations of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Learning observation and pupils' books show that most are making good progress. You are making good use of the special educational needs funding.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils in the school is below average. As a

result, published data does not give an accurate picture of their progress over time. You have used the pupil premium grant effectively, for example to support the appointment of an additional teacher to release the class teacher to provide highly effective catch-up sessions for disadvantaged pupils who are falling behind in English and mathematics. They also receive support from learning support assistants. The progress information for the end of key stage 2 in 2017 and work in pupils' books indicate that the progress of disadvantaged pupils is improving, especially in mathematics and writing.

- I also wanted to look at how you are using additional funding to improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Evidence shows that attendance of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has been affected by their medical needs. Having to miss school for medical treatments is the main reason for below-average attendance. The current attendance of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average.
- The attendance of disadvantaged pupils is also below average, and the number of those pupils persistently absent from school is above average. You monitor attendance thoroughly and quickly identify pupils for whom you need to act. You use the pupil premium funding to provide support for families of pupils whose attendance is a cause for concern. This support is helping the school to build strong relationships with these families. This support, together with the breakfast club, is improving the attendance of disadvantaged pupils. However, you are aware that you still have more work to do to bring their attendance in line with that of other pupils in the school. Whole-school attendance is average.
- Finally, I looked at the progress of current pupils in key stage 1, especially in reading, as the attainment for some groups of pupils was below average in 2016. 2017 key stage 1 results indicate that most groups of pupils are making good progress. The percentage of pupils leaving key stage 1 having attained greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics was above that in 2016.
- Pupils' books show that teachers have high expectations and that pupils are making good progress in all subjects. Most pupils in Year 1 can write in full sentences, using capital letters and full stops correctly. They use their phonics skills well to help them spell. Most-able pupils are writing short paragraphs. In mathematics, pupils are provided with a range of number and word problems to develop calculation methods, thus enabling good progress.
- The pupils I listened to read are enthusiastic readers. They can use a variety of methods to understand unfamiliar words. One pupil used expression well. They told me, 'I had to raise my voice so you would understand the person is shouting.' Evidence indicates that outcomes for pupils in key stage 1 are improving.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils' progress in reading continues to improve

- subject leaders make sure that standards in their subject are of the same quality as those in English and mathematics
- The attendance of disadvantaged pupils continues to improve so that it is in line with that of other pupils in the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Caroline Pardy
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and the senior leadership team. I held a meeting with four governors, including the chair of governors. I also spoke with the special educational needs coordinator. You, the deputy head and I observed learning taking place and looked at a selection of pupils' work from all year groups. I toured Nursery and Reception with the early years leader. I listened to a group of Year 2 pupils read and spoke to pupils informally at break and lunchtime.

I reviewed a range of the school's documents including its self-evaluation document and documents relating to pupil progress, safeguarding and attendance.

I considered the view of 77 parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including 30 free text responses. I also considered the eight responses to Ofsted's staff survey.