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8 January 2018

Miss Carrie Matthews
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Dear Miss Matthews

Short inspection of Willen Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 28 November 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 January 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since joining the school in September 2017, you have made a positive difference through the knowledge, experience and ambition that you bring to the school. You have evaluated the school's effectiveness accurately, and used this information to identify quickly the correct areas for further improvement. In 2017, in the key stage 2 national curriculum test results for reading, writing and mathematics combined there was a dip in the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard and this was lower than the national average. Quite rightly, you know that more pupils in key stage 2 are capable of reaching higher standards, especially in mathematics. Middle leaders have wasted no time in supporting staff to refine their teaching skills in English and mathematics, and as a result, pupils make good progress.

The majority of parents are supportive of the school. One parent said, 'Couldn't be happier with Willen, the staff are so natural, and welcoming to children, they strive to make our children learn as well as possible.'

Leaders ensure that there is a positive culture of high aspirations for pupils. Governors have identified correctly the areas for development. They challenge and support the senior leadership team effectively. You are supported well by the local authority. Advisors provide additional training for staff, including developing middle leaders, by working with local schools to share best practice.

Willen is a very happy place, where pupils enjoy coming to school. The calm, supportive and well-organised environment ensures that everyone is valued within this school's positive community. Pupils are supervised by adults well, they understand the school routines clearly. As a result, pupils' behaviour is good. During breaks, pupils play together well and adults ensure that they are safe. Pupils move around the building in a calm manner and are respectful of each other. The effective displays in the classrooms and corridors enhance the learning environment. Pupils say that teachers help them to make good progress. One pupil said, 'Teachers are nice and helpful, they help me improve my work.' Pupils engage well in their learning, they take pride in their work, which is presented well. There is clear evidence that pupils respond positively to teachers' feedback on their work.

School leaders have addressed most of the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection effectively. Teachers' expectations of pupils' achievements are much higher than previously. This is linked to the improvement in how teachers respond to pupils' work. Some pupils are challenged well in their work to make better progress. However, in mathematics, the most able pupils need to be challenged even more to enable them to make rapid progress. Your system to monitor and evaluate pupils' progress is strong. As a result, you track pupils' progress well so that teachers can respond quickly to any dip in achievement. Most disadvantaged pupils make good progress because of the targeted support that they receive. Although attendance is improving overall, the attendance of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities who are disadvantaged is not good enough. As a result, their learning and progress is not yet good.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. There is a culture of vigilance, supported by the school's safeguarding motto 'Safeguarding is everybody's business'. Pre-employment checks on staff are robust. There is ongoing training for staff and governors to ensure that they know how to keep pupils safe. There are effective systems to monitor and check the well-being of pupils. When any concerns arise, staff take quick and effective action.

You successfully work with outside agencies to support pupils and their families well. Pupils say that they feel safe in school and parents agree. Pupils say that staff will listen to them if they have a problem and they are confident that any matters will be taken seriously. All staff who responded to the questionnaire said that pupils are safe in the school. Pupils are aware of the potential dangers when using the internet. They said that if they ever viewed anything on the internet that made them feel unsafe, they would press a special button on the computer to block the screen and then tell an adult.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection, we agreed to look at the following aspects of the school's work:
 - the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements

- how leaders ensure that pupils achieve well in reading and writing in key stage 2
 - how effectively leaders ensure that pupils who are disadvantaged make good progress in English and mathematics
 - how leaders ensure that all groups of pupils make good progress in mathematics at key stage 2.
- The English leaders have made changes to the teaching of reading and writing so that pupils' next steps in learning are planned effectively. For example, the use of new writing books enables pupils to write in a wide range of genres, linked to very clear learning objectives. Pupils are supported well in their reading, especially when discussing the texts and the intent of the author. Pupils are provided with many opportunities to talk about their work and then write about it. The library is used well by pupils and enables them to read in a calm and purposeful environment. I listened to pupils of different abilities read. Pupils read fluently, with a good understanding of the text and intent of the author. Pupils have opportunities to write about what they are learning in other subjects, but this needs to be developed further to provide pupils with more experience of using their writing skills in different subjects.
- Most pupils who are disadvantaged make good progress from their starting points. They achieve as well as other children in the school. This is because support is carefully planned and monitored effectively. Additional teaching for these pupils ensures that their needs are met well. Teachers track pupils' progress well. This supports their planning to ensure that pupils' next steps are addressed. Disadvantaged pupils engage well in their learning, but the progress of some disadvantaged pupils, particularly those who have SEN and/or disabilities, is hampered because they do not attend school as often as they should.
- The mathematics leader has identified weaknesses in pupils' understanding in mathematics and has revised the delivery of the curriculum to best meet the needs of the pupils. You have ensured that adults support pupils' learning well by asking relevant questions to develop their mathematical skills, knowledge and understanding further. Pupils' increased understanding of number work and effective recall of times tables enables them to complete their number work quickly and accurately. Regular problem-solving activities form part of mathematics lessons to encourage pupils apply their understanding to real-life contexts. However, this work is too recent to have a significant impact on pupils' outcomes. The most able pupils need further challenge in mathematics to enable them to develop a greater depth of understanding and reach the highest standards.
- You have an unrelenting determination to ensure that pupils' progress and well-being is not affected by poor attendance. You rightly acknowledge that the attendance of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities who are disadvantaged needs to be improved so that they make good progress. Since your appointment, you have rigorously enforced the school attendance policy and communicated effectively to parents the importance of pupils' school attendance. The governing body checks rates of absence on a regular basis because they rightly recognise that low attendance can have an adverse effect on pupils' achievement. Good

attendance is promoted through letters sent home to parents, assemblies, supporting parents who require additional help and working with the local authority. Your rigorous approach has improved current overall pupils' attendance this year, compared to last year's figures. However, more work needs to take place to improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.

- With the exception of one governor, the school has a relatively new governing body. New governors are developing their skills to undertake and fulfil their statutory duties effectively. In the summer term 2017, governors evaluated the school in partnership with the local authority and agreed the correct development priorities for Willen. On your appointment in September 2017, you acted swiftly on the school's identified priorities to improve pupils' achievement in key stage 2. Middle leaders are very ambitious, with clear expectations about how pupils can make better than current progress. You offer good guidance and professional development to middle leaders. The new teaching and learning initiatives that they have introduced are showing early signs of positive impact on pupils' outcomes. Middle leaders now need time to embed the refinements to the teaching of English and mathematics so that pupils' progress can be evaluated fully. Middle leaders are making good progress to improve pupils' outcomes. However, their role needs to be further developed so that the impact on pupils' progress is greater.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the role of middle leaders is developed so they have greater impact on pupils' outcomes
- teachers continue to challenge pupils to achieve the highest standards, especially in mathematics
- rates of attendance continue to improve, particularly those of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and are disadvantaged.

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

Yours sincerely

Darren Aisthorpe
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, your deputy headteacher, the school business manager, the two English subject leaders, the mathematics subject leader, two governors, a group of

pupils and a representative from the local authority. I spoke with seven parents on the playground and considered the 37 responses to the Parent View online survey, including 19 written comments, and the 30 responses to the staff questionnaire. Together with you, I observed teaching and learning across the classes, including looking in pupils' mathematics and English books. I heard some pupils read. I also examined pupils' reading record books. I observed pupils at breaktime and spoke with them informally. I also considered a range of documents, including those relating to safeguarding, governance and pupils' progress.