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Mr Geoff Holmes  
Headteacher  
Weston CofE (VC) Primary School & Nursery  
Maiden Street  
Weston  
Hitchin  
Hertfordshire  
SG4 7AG

Dear Mr Holmes

### **Short inspection of Weston CofE (VC) Primary School & Nursery**

Following my visit to the school on 9 January 2018, 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 November 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 and your leadership team have worked relentlessly to create a happy school in which pupils and staff feel valued. The small size of your school ensures that pupils are treated as individuals, and feel safe and secure. Parents and carers who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, have positive views about your school. One parent wrote, 'My son is confident and happy and I feel content knowing that he will go on to his next school with a very positive outlook.' This comment is typical of the very large number received during the inspection.

Pupils are confident and self-assured and enjoy their lessons. This is because the teaching they typically experience is well matched to their needs. Teachers have good subject knowledge, and use this well to motivate pupils to want to achieve.

The school is adorned with examples of pupils' work both in corridors and in the classroom. You have made a point this year of celebrating the quality of pupils' writing. I saw many good examples of different styles of writing around the school. Pupils are actively encouraged to revisit their writing when it is returned from their teachers with a view to making it even better. Indeed, my scrutiny of pupils' written work shows that there is an ongoing dialogue between them and their teacher. This encourages pupils to try their best and experiment with new ideas. Pupils spoke

proudly about having their work displayed in the classroom through your 'pegs of pride' initiative.

Pupils behave very well in lessons and when moving around the school. There is very little bullying, and the school is free from graffiti. No pupils have been excluded from school for the last three years, which is testament to the respect they have for one another and their teachers. Pupils' above-average attendance reflects how well they enjoy coming to school.

Since taking up the headship of the school in January 2016, you have made a number of changes which have had a positive impact. You have addressed a legacy of weak teaching in key stage 1, restructured the grouping of pupils in lessons by combining different year groups and the governing body has recently been reconstituted. Governance is now more effective than was previously the case.

School improvement planning ties in closely with your accurate and regular self-evaluation systems. Your staff share your commitment to school improvement and this is reflected through their highly complimentary responses to the online survey.

Children get off to a good start in the early years. The proportion of pupils achieving a good level of development has been in line with or above the national average for the past few years.

Most pupils typically achieve well over time. The legacy of weak teaching has undoubtedly impacted negatively on the quality of pupils' writing in key stage 1. You also acknowledge that a greater proportion of the most able pupils could do better at the end of key stage 2 in achieving the higher standard in reading, writing and in mathematics combined. Your school development plan also rightly prioritises mathematics as an area for improvement across the school, as progress dipped at the end of key stage 2 in 2017.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The safeguarding of children is of paramount importance to staff and governors of the school. All staff undergo comprehensive training on a regular basis, receive and sign to say they have received and read key policies and documents and routinely discuss safeguarding matters as agenda items at meetings.

My scrutiny of records relating to vulnerable pupils shows that systems for raising concerns are known and understood by staff. Details of relevant children are meticulously maintained, appropriate external agencies informed and details of actions and resolutions are recorded with precision.

The school's single central record of recruitment checks of staff is fully compliant with current requirements.

## Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry looked at to what extent the school's leaders and governors had addressed the areas for improvement identified at the time of the previous inspection. The extent to which these have been addressed is a reflection of the impact of leadership.
- Phonics is clearly taught well as indicated by the impressive proportions of pupils who meet the required standard in the phonics screening check. Leaders have focused on promoting a love of reading and have provided well-attended workshops for parents to help them to support their children at home. My discussion with pupils shows that they enjoy reading a wide range of books. Teachers have also been trained to support pupils to develop the skill of reading for inference.
- Work is now better matched to the different needs of pupils. Teachers skilfully guide pupils at the start of the lesson to select tasks ranging from 'warm' to 'scorching'. My scrutiny of pupils' books showed that they typically selected tasks which were suitably challenging. Governors have a better understanding of how the pupil premium grant is spent, and a designated governor ensures that the impact of this funding is measured through well-targeted and searching questioning.
- My second line of enquiry looked at the action the school's leaders are taking to ensure that most-able pupils achieve as well as they should, particularly in mathematics. This was because although some pupils achieved the higher standard in reading, writing and mathematics, no pupils achieved the higher standard in all three at the end of key stage 2 in 2017.
- Mathematics features in this year's school development plan and you quickly took responsibility for mathematics following the resignation of the previous lead teacher in December 2017. The calculation policy has been rewritten, and its implementation is monitored through visits to lessons and your scrutiny of pupils' books.
- Two special evenings have been staged for parents as well as one open afternoon at which children were able to show their parents some of the mathematics they had been learning in class. These events have helped parents in supporting their children with mathematics at home. My scrutiny of the most able pupils' books showed that progress has improved because the work is challenging, and teachers have implemented strategies acquired through well-planned training sessions. All teachers also have a mathematics-related pupil target this year as part of their performance management.
- My next line of enquiry looked at how well the very small number of disadvantaged pupils achieve in the school. I approached this line of enquiry with caution due to the small numbers of pupils who are eligible for additional funding.
- Although academic outcomes disappointingly dipped for the few disadvantaged pupils at the end of key stage 2 in 2017, when looking at this group's progress over the last three years, they have met the required standard in reading, writing and in mathematics at the end of key stages 1 and 2. Individual case studies for

disadvantaged pupils show that although academic outcomes may be inconsistent, these pupils develop into well-rounded individuals due to effective counselling which improves their self-esteem.

- You have raised the profile of disadvantaged pupils in the school by designating a governor to oversee these pupils. You also monitor this group of pupils' participation in extra-curricular activities to ensure that no pupil misses out. An experienced teacher, specifically appointed to support disadvantaged pupils, and a higher-level teaching assistant, make sure that these pupils can access the curriculum equally as well as their classmates.
- My final line of enquiry came from the outcomes of the Parent View questionnaire, as a significant minority of parents who responded expressed negative views about communication. They felt that the school's leaders did not respond well to their concerns, and felt that the way the school reports on pupils' progress could be improved.
- You work hard to keep parents informed about school developments and operate an open-door policy to enable parents to raise their concerns. You send home weekly newsletters and have arranged special workshops for parents which are relevant to their children's needs. Reports have been redesigned and now clearly indicate whether a child is working at age-related expectations. Targets are also clearly identified. Teachers' effective implementation of the school's assessment policy enables parents to see from pupils' books how well their child is working in lessons and how they can improve. Parents of children in the early years are about to have online access to their children's work.
- While it is clear that the school's leaders use a range of strategies to communicate with parents, the negative response to Parent View cannot be ignored, and it is important to address this negative perception in order to fully engage all parents.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the strong focus on improving progress in mathematics remains, including for most-able pupils
- the quality of writing improves in key stage 1
- further work is carried out to engage those parents who have negative perceptions about how effectively the school's leaders and governors communicate with them.

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

Yours sincerely

John Daniell  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

I met with you and the deputy headteacher, as well as the leaders of the early years and science and the special educational needs co-ordinator, to discuss progress since the previous inspection. I met with the chair and five other members of the governing body to gain their views on the school. I also met with a representative of 'Herts for learning', as well as a group of most-able pupils who also showed me examples of their work.

I scrutinised a variety of sources of information, including your self-evaluation summary document, the school's plans for improvement and assessment information for all year groups. I held a meeting to examine the school's safeguarding and child protection procedures, the records of checks leaders make on the suitability of staff to work with children and information relating to attendance.

I undertook observations of learning across the school, viewed work in pupils' books and spoke with pupils about their learning when visiting lessons. I took account of the views of 12 staff and 24 pupils who responded to the online survey. I also considered the 88 responses by parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.