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Mrs Jessica Lees
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Lees

Short inspection of Willoughton Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 6 February 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 July 2014.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

Upon your arrival as headteacher in February 2017, you quickly identified that teaching and learning were not good enough. You judged that teachers were not teaching the most recent national curriculum, and that no adequate system was in place to assess pupils' achievement. Too few pupils were making sufficient progress. You immediately set about raising the expectations of teachers and you have introduced a new system to assess both pupils' attainment and the gains that they are making. You are ensuring that colleagues in other schools check the accuracy of your teachers' judgements. As a result, you have been able to set meaningful targets for improving pupils' outcomes.

There has been extensive turbulence in staffing over the past 12 months. All three teachers are new, or relatively new, to the profession, with two beginning at the school this term. They told me how you have wasted no time in giving them very useful support. This has included being partnered with colleagues in other schools, so they can observe teaching, as well as to receive ideas, advice and support from them. Such support has helped them understand better how, for example, to plan for different year groups within one class. You are very aware, however, that these teachers need further support so that their work is consistently effective. Colleagues in a local teaching school are helping the most experienced teacher, who has

responsibility for mathematics across the school, to understand her leadership role more fully. However, you know that she has not yet had the opportunity to look at the quality of pupils' work in mathematics across year groups. You are keen for her to do this as soon as possible, so that she can report to the governing body on what action needs to be taken next to improve teaching and learning in this subject.

You are aware that school leaders over time have not addressed effectively all the areas for improvement from the previous inspection. The monitoring of the quality of teaching you have undertaken since your arrival shows that pupils are not consistently being moved on to harder work sufficiently quickly. It also confirms that, too often, pupils receive work that is not matched well to their needs, particularly in mathematics. Around half of the pupils I met during my visit told me that the work they are given in this subject was often too easy. You have since replaced the school's scheme of work for mathematics, in order that pupils are more rigorously challenged in this subject.

You have introduced a new system to give pupils better guidance in their work. This system is based on the things pupils have told you they want. Pupils say that this new support is proving helpful in showing them how to improve their work and what to do next. Pupils enjoy their lessons overall and say that they are interesting. They stay healthy by enjoying taking part in both physical education (PE) lessons and the breaktime games that staff show them how to play. Because learning is fun, pupils want to come to school. Attendance remains consistently above the national average for both pupils overall and for disadvantaged pupils. Very few are persistently absent.

The governing body was reorganised at the start of this academic year, with a new chair and vice-chair. Governors have received training on their role and are now challenging you more effectively. They are checking that the information you supply to them is accurate. You are receiving support in your own role from a local leader in education, through a teaching school project to improve pupils' attainment in English. The collaborative partnership with five other local schools is helping you and your teachers, for example, to take part in joint training.

Although you and the staff know that there is much to do, morale is high and there is a clear sense that things are quickly improving. This is due your ability to focus immediately on the correct priorities, and work together as a team to put in place effective action that is having an impact. Those who responded to Ofsted's staff questionnaire returned unanimously positive views, describing how you are considerate of their well-being and they are proud to work at Willoughton Primary School. Parents, too, speak favourably of the school, with a very large majority who responded to Parent View stating that they would recommend the school to others. As one parent stated, 'The school is friendly and welcoming. The best review I could give is my son's. When I dropped him off at school this morning he said, "I love this place."'

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose.

Your staff understand fully their responsibilities to report any safeguarding concerns to you, and are vigilant in their approach. They have received effective training, including in areas of recent national concern, such as extremism. The school's records show that you take brisk action to refer to a range of external agencies where this is needed.

Pupils I met told me that they, their friends and their younger siblings feel safe in school. They say that bullying and name-calling are now uncommon, and when they happen, staff deal with it quickly and effectively. Pupils say that if they are worried about something, they can approach a member of staff. They are taught to swim, and informed well about a range of risks to their safety, such as fire, strangers and roads. They also learn how to protect themselves while they use the internet. Teachers tell them that they must always tell an adult, who they know, if they see or receive a message or image that makes them feel uncomfortable.

Inspection findings

- My key lines of enquiry during the inspection were focused upon the achievement of pupils historically and currently, along with the impact you have made to the school's provision since your arrival. I also looked at how staff are attending to pupils' physical and mental welfare.
- Pupils' achievement has declined in recent years. For example, the progress of pupils in reading in key stage 2 has been in the lowest 20% of all schools nationally, and was significantly below average last year. Progress in mathematics has been too low for three years. As a result, not enough pupils have left the school well prepared for secondary school. School data confirms that pupils' current progress is not consistent across the school. Insufficient proportions of pupils are working at the levels expected for their age. Teachers are now busy filling the gaps in pupils' understanding and skills, so that pupils can catch up where needed.
- Although pupils' most recent work shows notable and clear early improvements due to better teaching, you agree that teachers need further advice and support so their practice is consistently good. You have correctly identified that pupils' mathematics books show that teachers do not show them well enough how to reason mathematically nor to solve problems. These, and pupils' other books, confirm that, although the work pupils of lower ability receive is broadly appropriate for their needs, teachers do not set enough challenging work for those of typical and of higher ability. In addition, teachers do not expect pupils to write enough, both in English lessons and in other subjects.
- You have quickly improved pupils' conduct and their attitudes to learning. All staff are now consistently applying clearer expectations for pupils' behaviour. As a result, pupils are paying attention in class, following instructions and concentrating on their work. Pupils I met were keen to show me their learning.
- There has been a clear improvement in pupils' spelling ability across the school. This is strongest for the youngest pupils, because they are now receiving consistently good phonics teaching. Books from pupils in Year 1 show that they are much more accurate in their spelling than in the past, and apply this carefully

to their writing.

- Pupils like keeping healthy. They have a clear understanding about which foods they should eat plentifully, and which they should eat sparingly. They enjoy taking part in PE and sport, and especially games. Teachers teach pupils not to worry if pupils make occasional mistakes, because these can be helpful in showing them what to improve next.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils become sufficiently skilled in mathematical problem-solving and reasoning, in explaining their thinking in writing
- pupils of typical ability, and also the most able, are given work that is consistently challenging for them
- teachers develop pupils' ability to persevere in writing extended pieces of work across the curriculum
- the support that leaders give to teachers is sustained and extended so that teachers develop their confidence and skills to be consistently effective in their role
- the lead teacher for mathematics is given regular opportunities to scrutinise pupils' work so that she can report to the governing body on the quality of teaching and learning in this subject.

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

Yours sincerely

Roary Pownall
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met you and shared my lines of enquiry. I also met with members of the governing body, and all three members of the teaching staff. I considered the responses of parents to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and all free-text comments, along with the school's most recent questionnaire for parents. I scrutinised the responses to Ofsted's questionnaires for staff. We visited all classes together. I looked at a sample of pupils' work. I observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and met with a large group of them at breaktime. I viewed a range of documents, including leaders' evaluation of the school's current performance and its plans for further improvement. I considered a number of policy documents, including those for safeguarding, and investigated the procedure for reporting

accidents. I examined the school's website to check that it meets requirements on the publication of specified information.