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21 February 2018

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Dear Mrs Moore

Short inspection of Windhill21

Following my visit to the school on 7 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in February 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in certain areas. This may indicate that the school is improving towards being outstanding. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

You provide exceptional leadership, ensuring that staff are preparing pupils to become confident and enthusiastic learners. Families are drawn from diverse communities, and staff take every opportunity to promote mutual respect and understanding. The school's ethos is friendly, welcoming and supportive. Pupils are given every opportunity to take risks, to challenge themselves and to be successful. Classrooms are vibrant and stimulating, providing pupils with materials which promote effective learning and exemplify the high standards expected of them. This is a school whose values of 'challenge, discover and create' are skilfully woven through the curriculum. Staff thoroughly enjoy working at the school and the overwhelming majority of pupils, parents and carers feel proud and excited to be members of the school community. Some pupils travel a long way to attend the school.

The parents I spoke to informally at the start of the day shared with me that they are delighted with the school. Typical comments included: 'There is a wonderful, community atmosphere' and, 'The teachers are great. My child settled in immediately and he is making fantastic progress.' The overwhelming majority of

parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, endorsed these views and commented that they would recommend the school to other parents.

Pupils behave exceptionally well in lessons and around the school. They listen carefully to adults and they are polite to each other and courteous to visitors. They concentrate hard, demonstrate mature attitudes and apply themselves well towards their work.

Since your appointment as headteacher, you have ensured that teaching, subject leadership and the curriculum have all improved. As a result, pupils make extremely good progress, frequently attaining well above national averages by the end of key stage 2.

Governors act strategically, basing their decisions on a secure understanding of the school's key priorities. Governors visit the school regularly to check on pupils' social and academic development and to ensure that everyone is well looked after. Governors offer a good level of support but they also provide rigorous, professional challenge to school leaders.

Safeguarding is effective.

The four designated safeguarding leaders are an extremely effective team, ensuring that all child protection arrangements are thorough and fit for purpose. Records of staff's suitability to work with children are clear and well organised. There are well-understood systems in place, enabling members of staff to report concerns promptly and efficiently. Senior leaders act quickly to follow up any referrals, and they work in close partnership with other agencies to help keep pupils safe.

The pupils I spoke to informally around the school told me that they are happy and well cared for at school. Parents' views are also extremely positive, agreeing that pupils are safe and well looked after at school.

Inspection findings

- In order to ascertain whether the school remained good, my first line of enquiry was about the quality of provision in the early years. The percentage of children achieving a good level of development by the time they leave Reception has been in line with the national average over the last three years. Interestingly, the standards attained in reading have often been higher.
- Many children enter the Nursery and Reception classes with skills and abilities that are below, and sometimes well below, those typically expected for their age. An increasing proportion of children are at the early stages of speaking English, and many others have additional speech and language needs.
- Staff are quick to identify children's specific needs and to provide specialist support. Additional programmes tailored towards physical development, emotional and life skills, and speech, language and communication help children

to make rapid progress.

- The extremely stimulating learning environment, both indoors and outside, helps to ensure that children are well motivated, interested in their activities and able to make strong progress in all areas of the early years curriculum.
- All adults in the setting make powerful contributions to children's learning and personal development. Skills introduced by teachers in whole-class sessions are skilfully reinforced during individual and small-group activities over the course of the school day. During one mathematics activity, children were learning to compare the heights of different towers they had built. Staff guided and challenged the most able children to record their results in a bar chart, representing a level of expectation beyond that normally seen in children of this age.
- The early years leader is an extremely well-regarded and skilled practitioner. She has a clear plan for continual improvement of the setting. She ensures that positive relationships, high expectations and the best quality teaching, learning and assessment procedures are employed. This enables children to succeed to the very best of their ability.
- My second line of enquiry explored how well leaders are sustaining improvements in outcomes for pupils in key stage 1. Between 2016 and 2017, the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 2 increased from broadly in line with national averages to above, and sometimes well above, the level achieved by most pupils nationally.
- When I visited classrooms, spoke to pupils in lessons and looked at their books, it was clear that they are continuing to make extremely good progress, especially in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils' attitudes, shaped by the engaging curriculum, teachers' strong subject knowledge and a clear expectation of success, are unwaveringly positive.
- In order to deepen learning, teachers routinely ask pupils to explain what they have learned. These opportunities encourage pupils to think hard about what they know, and allow teachers and teaching assistants to provide additional guidance, practice or extension work when necessary.
- The school's policy for teaching mathematics ensures that pupils receive a highly effective blend of opportunities to learn, practice, apply and deepen their skills. Mathematical equipment and resources are used well. This supports pupils in the early stages of acquiring new understanding, and helps them visualise harder challenges and tackle word problems confidently.
- My final line of enquiry was about the quality of the wider curriculum, and the progress pupils make in subjects other than English and mathematics. The school's website identifies a number of interesting facets to the curriculum, including an international perspective, opportunities for pupils to demonstrate curiosity and to become immersed in the topics they are studying.
- During the inspection, I looked at evidence in pupils' topic books and work on display. I talked to subject leaders and pupils, and visited classrooms to see a variety of subjects being taught. It was clear that learning is carefully planned to equip pupils with a strong range of skills and experiences across the whole

curriculum. Year 5 pupils, for example, had previously visited an auction house as part of their history work about the 1930s. Pupils have now staged an auction of their own, demonstrating their knowledge of historical artefacts and key events from the period, while confidently presenting themselves in front of an audience.

- A clear strength of the curriculum is the detailed planning by teachers, which enables pupils to focus their learning within real-life contexts. A recent science topic on plastics included a visit into Bishop's Stortford to talk to residents, promote recycling and collect litter. Last term, Year 3 pupils planned their own ghost tour of the town as part of a topic on magic. The topic included studying the Harry Potter books and a visit from a magician. Children love these topics, which incorporate skills across different subjects and promote excitement about learning. Teachers' creative use of statements for pupils to discuss, such as 'You'd be a fool to live near an active volcano' in a topic about natural disasters, encourage further debate and deepen pupils' thinking.
- Visits, such as the annual Year 6 residential trip to France, learning to ski and snowboard at a local snowdome and exploring the environment with a forest school curriculum, add further interest to the curriculum. Music, French, physical education (PE) and computing are also well organised, often using the expertise of specialist practitioners. The immersion room provides a fascinating, 360 degree panorama for audio-visual presentations, which pupils thoroughly enjoy.
- Last year, leaders began to introduce new approaches to improve the accuracy of assessments in subjects other than English and mathematics. Teachers are still developing their skills in this area. Consequently, I asked you to plan more training and moderation activities, in order to ensure the precision of teachers' judgements.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- Teachers are given more opportunities, through training and moderation, to improve their skills in assessing pupils' work in subjects other than English and mathematics.

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

Yours sincerely

Nicholas Rudman
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you to discuss my key lines of enquiry, the school's priorities for development and the impact of actions taken. I also met the leader responsible for the early years and key stage 1, the science leader and a member of a curriculum team. I met with four governors, including the chair. I scrutinised the school's improvement plan, governing body minutes of meetings, plans and records for the use of additional funding, a report from an external consultant and the school's assessment information. I checked the school's safeguarding and child protection procedures and the records of checks leaders make on the suitability of staff to work with children. We undertook joint observations of learning across the school, looked at work in pupils' books and spoke with pupils about their learning during lessons. I analysed information from Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, including responses received through the free-text service. I also analysed responses from staff and pupils to their respective questionnaires.