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Mr James Chester  
Headteacher  
Whitton Community Primary School  
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Dear Mr Chester

### **Short inspection of Whitton Community Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 8 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 October 2012.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. The positive effect of your leadership is evident. You and your staff are ambitious to further raise standards and improve progress for all pupils. You have worked effectively with governors and your leaders to review and improve school systems. You have clearly identified aspects of teaching and learning which need to be better and have taken effective action to address these.

You were appointed after a turbulent time for the school, with several changes in the leadership before you took on the role of headteacher in February 2017. During this time of instability, standards in the school declined. However, the trust has been effective in supporting you to develop a team of skilled senior and middle leaders, who are knowledgeable and model good practice. As a result, standards are rapidly rising and teaching continues to improve. You and your leaders have made effective use of training opportunities with other schools within the trust, to develop staff skills and improve pupils' learning experiences. Staff are highly motivated and proud to work at the school. Pupils appreciate the challenges they are given and enjoy the rewards they gain for positive attitudes and successful learning. They told me, 'The adults are really nice, they help us to get better.'

Almost all parents and carers are very pleased with the school under your leadership. The large majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire said that they would recommend the school to another parent. One parent, who summed up the views of many, stated: 'My child enjoys school and learning. The teachers are always happy to help with any questions. My child comes

home with new knowledge every day and speaks about the staff highly. I am very pleased with the progress he has made.'

Children make a good start at Whitton Community Primary School. You and your staff provide a stimulating and caring environment so that individual needs are met well and children quickly grow in confidence. Since the previous inspection the outside environment for the Nursery and Reception children has been successfully improved. It is now fully resourced with well-planned, stimulating activities provided. Staff ensure that children have many opportunities to develop their early reading, writing and number skills in a purposeful way. During their time in early years, children make good progress from their often-low starting points and the number achieving a good level of development at the end of the Reception Year is increasing.

You have addressed the areas for improvement identified in the inspection report of the predecessor school. You and your staff enable pupils to apply their literacy and mathematical skills in a wide range of real-life situations. For example, Year 2 pupils recently designed and wrote their own fire safety leaflets. They joined with local firefighters and distributed these to the general public in the town centre. Year 6 pupils enjoyed writing scripts for their role as curators at the Ipswich museum where they were displaying their own artwork.

Another area for improvement highlighted in the previous inspection was to ensure that activities fully challenge all pupils, particularly the most able. The work in pupils' books and the school's current assessment information shows that the most able pupils across the school make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics from their starting points. During the inspection, I observed that they are provided with a range of tasks in their lessons that make them apply their skills in different ways and think more deeply. A group of the most able pupils told me, 'We get hard work and we enjoy being challenged.'

You, your leaders and the governors recognise that there are still areas to develop to move the school forward and you acknowledge that further raising standards in key stage 2 and improving pupils' attendance are key priorities. These are already included in the school's action plans.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders and governors have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and there is a strong safeguarding culture at the school. Rigorous checks are carried out on adults before they are allowed to start working or volunteering at the school. The single central record is well maintained and up to date.

You ensure that staff receive regular safeguarding training. Staff understand their responsibilities and are quick to report any concerns to the school's designated safeguarding leaders. The school's records show that all concerns are rigorously followed up.

The effective pastoral support, led by the home-school liaison manager, helps many vulnerable families by working closely with organisations which can provide focused and timely support. The mutual trust that has been built up between the school and the local community is helping this support to have a strong impact.

Pupils said that they feel happy, safe and settled in school. They told me that they know how to keep safe, for example, when using the internet. Pupils also said that bullying is rare, and if it does happen staff quickly sort it out. They confidently stated that they can talk to any adult in the school about any worries they may have. Pupils behave exceptionally well in lessons, and around the school. This is due to the very positive relationships they have with staff and the high standards of behaviour that all staff consistently expect of them.

Almost all parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, agreed that their children are happy and safe in school.

### **Inspection findings**

- In order to check whether the school remains good, I followed a number of lines of enquiry. I considered how effectively phonics is taught and if pupils make good enough progress in this area from their starting points. Published results show that although the proportion of pupils who reach the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check has been rising since the previous inspection, in 2017 it was below the national average.
- Effective steps have been taken by you and other leaders to strengthen phonics provision. Training for staff, led by the effective phonics leader, has successfully raised expectations, and daily sessions are sharp and well paced. Pupils' progress in phonics is closely tracked, and targeted support quickly put in place, to address any underachievement. This improves pupils' outcomes.
- The phonics lessons that we observed together were interactive and fun, so pupils were interested and enjoying their learning. When I heard a group of pupils read their books, they demonstrated a good level of phonic knowledge. They were able to use and apply their skills to identify sounds when reading different words.
- You and other leaders are making sure that the improved teaching of phonics is closely monitored and evaluated over a longer period to ensure that it is having the desired impact. As a result, pupils' attainment in phonics has improved and the school's current assessment information indicates that a higher proportion of pupils are likely to achieve the expected standard.
- Another line of enquiry focused on how leaders are ensuring that pupils achieve well in reading across the school. In 2016 and 2017, pupils' achievement in reading was more variable than in writing and mathematics. Pupils' progress in reading is already a priority in your action plans.
- You have acted swiftly to bring about improvements in reading. You have appointed experienced and enthusiastic staff to lead on reading across the school. They provide training for staff so that the quality of teaching improves

consistently. Leaders closely track pupils' progress in reading. Any pupils whose progress is a cause for concern receive extra help, tailored to their needs, so that they quickly catch up with their peers. Parents appreciate the workshops that leaders organise so that they better understand how to support their children's reading at home.

- Alongside these focused actions, you have ensured that reading for pleasure is promoted well. Classrooms across the school have attractive reading corners, inviting pupils of all ages to spend time enjoying a book. You have ensured that pupils have access to high-quality texts through the creative use of your school library. Pupils appreciate the lively story sessions and the many challenges and competitions to motivate them with their reading. As a result, pupils show great enthusiasm for and enjoyment of reading.
- Pupils were keen to explain how much they love reading and tell me about their favourite authors. Pupils commented, 'We have loads of books in our library, and everywhere.' They understand the importance of learning to read and said, 'The more you read, the more you learn,' and that reading 'expands your mind and helps you get a good job'.
- There is no doubting your commitment to improving pupils' outcomes in reading, and your actions are having a positive impact. Most pupils now make good progress in reading. However, you acknowledge that there is still work to be done to make sure more pupils in key stage 2 reach the standards in reading that they should.
- Finally, I explored how well pupils are supported and encouraged to attend school. This line of enquiry arose from historical information showing that not all pupils attended school as often as they should. I looked at rates of attendance and, specifically, the attendance of vulnerable pupils. Previously, these groups have had particularly high rates of absence, including persistent absence.
- Leaders are aware of the need to improve attendance, and rigorous procedures are in place to establish the reasons for any pupil's absence. You and your leaders are quick to address attendance issues; for example, staff phoning parents at the start of the day when pupils do not turn up for school.
- Your focused actions are having a positive impact, and the attendance figures for the school, and particularly for vulnerable pupils, are all improving. Still, there are a number of pupils who, for various and sometimes complex reasons, are regularly absent. Pupils' attendance rightly remains a school improvement priority.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- recently introduced strategies to improve reading are further embedded so that more pupils at the end of key stage 2 reach at least the expected standard
- work on improving the attendance of pupils is further developed so that the

number of pupils who fail to attend the school regularly continues to reduce.

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

Yours sincerely

Fiona Webb  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

- You and I discussed the lines of enquiry for this inspection, the school's internal evaluation of its performance, plans for future improvement, attendance records and information about current pupils' progress and attainment.
- Meetings were held with you, your deputy headteacher, some of your senior leaders, and your governors, including the chair of governors. I also met with the chief executive officer of the trust.
- I gathered a range of evidence to evaluate the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. This included joint observations, with you and your deputy headteacher, of teaching and learning in most classes.
- We looked at a sample of pupils' current work across all subjects and across a wide range of abilities.
- I heard some pupils from Year 1, Year 2 and Year 6 read. I talked to pupils about their reading habits and looked at their reading records.
- I spoke informally to a number of pupils in classrooms about their learning, and met more formally with a group of pupils to talk about their school experience.
- Policies and procedures for the safeguarding of pupils were examined, including mandatory checks made during the recruitment of new staff and case studies about referrals made to external agencies. A discussion was held with the school's designated safeguarding leader.
- The views of 11 parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, were taken into account, as well as the 10 responses parents made using the free-text service. I also considered the views of the parents I spoke with during the inspection.
- I looked at the 27 responses to Ofsted's online staff survey and the 12 responses to Ofsted's online pupil survey.