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Mr Jason Willetts
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Dear Mr Willetts

Short inspection of Foley Infant School

Following my visit to the school on 14 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 September 2013.

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 staff provide pupils with a safe and welcoming learning environment. Adults know pupils well and it is clear that Foley Infant School is a caring community where staff nurture pupils as individuals. As a result, pupils are happy to come to school and enjoy learning.

Parents are very positive about the school. Almost all of the parents and carers who responded to the Parent View survey say that their children are happy, well taught and make good progress. The overwhelming majority of parents would recommend the school to others. Comments from parents such as, 'this school really cares about the individual children,' and, 'the staff are always very approachable and friendly' are typical.

You have successfully addressed the areas for improvement identified at the school's previous inspection. Leaders were asked to close the gap between the attainment of most-able disadvantaged pupils and others in the school. You use pupil premium funding effectively to provide disadvantaged pupils with additional support to meet their individual needs in reading, writing and mathematics. As a result, the school's assessment information shows that current disadvantaged pupils are making secure progress. In 2017, outcomes for the small number of disadvantaged pupils at the end of Year 2 were above those of other pupils in the school and others nationally. Strategies introduced to improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils have been effective in reducing the overall absence of this

group.

The previous inspection report also asked leaders to ensure that boys achieve as well as girls in reading and writing. In response to this, staff plan topics that appeal equally to the interests of boys and girls. Leaders have purchased additional reading materials to encourage boys to read and individuals receive targeted support to ensure that they read regularly. As a result, the gap in attainment between boys and girls currently in the school is closing. In 2017, more boys than girls achieved the expected standard at the end of Year 2 in reading and writing.

You make regular checks on the quality of teaching and use these to identify strengths and areas for improvement accurately. Teachers receive appropriate training to support them in implementing new approaches, for example in reasoning and problem-solving in mathematics. You have correctly identified the need for further professional development to ensure that teaching is consistently good and that the best practice in the school continues to be refined.

Leaders and governors have an accurate understanding of the school's performance. Improvement plans for different aspects of the school's work identify the right priorities and actions. However, these plans do not contain clear and specific targets for improvement and leaders' monitoring does not focus sufficiently on pupils' progress. As a result, leaders and governors are not able to evaluate fully the effectiveness of their actions in improving pupils' outcomes.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Regular training ensures that staff have appropriate knowledge of safeguarding and the action they should take if they have concerns about a pupil's safety or welfare. When necessary, leaders refer concerns to other agencies and provide support for pupils and their families. Leaders reflect on their practice and adapt what they do in order to support a culture that keeps pupils safe, for example by refining processes for following up pupils' absence.

Pupils feel safe in school and say that they can speak to a trusted adult if they feel sad or worried. Although pupils are unsure about the difference between bullying and 'falling out', they are confident that adults resolve any issues quickly. Pupils know about how to keep themselves safe online and about other aspects of keeping safe, such as 'stranger danger'. Staff and parents unanimously agree that pupils feel safe at school.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry was to find out whether leaders' actions have improved the attainment of boys in phonics. This was because in 2017, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check was below the national average. Boys achieved less well than girls in the school and lower than boys nationally.
- In Reception Year, adults identify speech and language difficulties quickly and put effective support in place to ensure that children are ready for learning in Year 1. In key stage 1, teachers assess pupils' learning in phonics regularly. They have a good understanding of pupils' abilities and use this to plan teaching that closely matches pupils' needs. This ensures that the majority of pupils make good progress in the development of their phonics skills. In Year 2, pupils who do not reach the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check benefit from additional support to help them to catch up. As a result, the majority of Year 2 pupils now have the phonics skills expected for their age.
- My second line of enquiry was to look at how leaders are improving the attendance and outcomes of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. This was because for the past two years, this group of pupils have achieved below other groups of pupils in the school and nationally. In 2017, no pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities achieved the expected standard in writing. In 2016, the absence and persistent absence levels of this group of pupils were in the highest 10% of schools nationally.
- The special educational needs coordinator knows pupils well. Staff identify pupils' needs early to ensure that they receive the right support. Leaders make appropriate use of external agencies to provide specialist advice and staff take part in relevant training to enable them to meet pupils' needs, for example in speech and language therapy. Individual plans to support pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities match their needs well. The special educational needs coordinator has rightly identified that some of the targets set for pupils are too broad to enable staff to measure small steps of progress. He is currently working on making pupils' targets more specific and measurable.
- Leaders monitor the attendance of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities effectively, and provide support where needed. Leaders follow up absence rigorously and involve other professionals when appropriate. As a result, the attendance of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities has improved and persistent absence is declining.
- My third line of enquiry was to investigate whether children in early years and pupils in key stage 1 are making good progress in reading and mathematics. This was because for the past two years, similar proportions of pupils have achieved the expected standard in reading and mathematics at the end of early years and key stage 1.
- Leaders are taking effective action to ensure that pupils make good progress in reading. Pupils talk enthusiastically about 'Mr Willetts' reading challenge', which has been successful in ensuring that the majority of pupils read regularly at home. Pupils also enjoy reading daily in class. Reading volunteers provide regular support to pupils who are not able to read frequently at home or who are at risk

of falling behind their peers. As a result, lower attaining pupils use their phonics skills effectively to decode unfamiliar words and higher attaining pupils read with fluency, accuracy and understanding.

- The school's assessment information shows that pupils are making appropriate progress in mathematics and achieve well. Leaders have rightly identified the need to provide more opportunities for pupils to use their mathematical skills to reason and solve problems. Staff have received training and are beginning to set tasks that require pupils to explain their thinking. However, the most able pupils still do not receive enough challenge to enable them to make the progress of which they are capable.
- My fourth line of enquiry was to explore how effectively teachers are meeting the needs of middle-attaining pupils in writing so that they achieve well. This was because for the past two years, this group of pupils have not achieved as well as pupils nationally who have the same starting points.
- Leaders have prioritised improving children's writing skills in early years. Interesting activities enthuse children to want to write and the indoor and outdoor learning environments successfully promote writing. Adults plan activities that closely match children's abilities and provide individuals with sufficient challenge. For example, children enjoy completing their personalised 'mini-me' and 'jolly job' challenges each day. As a result, children make good progress and the proportion of children achieving and exceeding the expected standard in writing at the end of Reception Year is rising.
- Leaders' evaluation of writing in key stage 1 has identified pupils' handwriting and the accuracy of pupils' spelling and grammar as areas for improvement. Work in books shows that pupils in Year 2 are making secure progress in using their phonics skills to spell. Since the start of the academic year, pupils' use of punctuation and grammar is more accurate, their sentences are more complex and their choice of vocabulary is increasingly rich. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 form letters correctly. Overall, middle-attaining pupils are making good progress in the development of their writing skills, although some variation in the rates of progress across Years 1 and 2 remains.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- school improvement plans contain clear and specific targets for improvement, and monitoring and evaluation activities focus on the progress pupils are making, so that leaders and governors can judge more precisely the impact of their actions on pupils' progress
- teachers are supported to develop and refine their practice so that all teaching is as good as the best in the school and, as a result, all pupils make consistently good or better progress, particularly the most able.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools

commissioner and the director of children's services for Staffordshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Claire Jones
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, the deputy headteacher and the leaders for reading and writing. I met with six members of the governing body, including the chair. I undertook two learning walks with you and the deputy headteacher and looked at work in pupils' English and mathematics books. I held a meeting with representatives from the school council and talked to pupils in lessons. I also listened to a group of pupils read. I examined a range of school documentation, including information relating to pupils' attainment and progress and pupils' attendance, the school improvement plan, and your self-evaluation of the school's performance. I also scrutinised a range of safeguarding documents. I spoke to parents at the start of the school day and took into account 100 responses to Parent View. I also took into account 22 responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire.