

26 March 2018

Mr Chris Tavener
Headteacher
Wootton Lower School
Bedford Road
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Bedfordshire
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Dear Mr Tavener

Short inspection of Wootton Lower School

Following my visit to the school on 13 March 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 October 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 have high expectations for what your pupils can achieve. You and other senior leaders are continually seeking ways in which to ensure that pupils continue to flourish both socially and academically.

The move to a split site in 2015 has been managed extremely well. Across both sites, you and your heads of school have secured consistent practice so that provision is equally strong in each. You ensure that there is good communication between the sites. Activities such as family days help pupils all feel part of one school.

You, the heads of school and your knowledgeable governing body have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and have dealt successfully with the development points from the last inspection. As the school continues to expand, you are aware that you will need to delegate more widely responsibility for securing school improvement. I could see that, over the last year, the senior leadership team has had to take on too much due to staffing changes. We agreed that establishing a strong and effective middle leadership team is now a key priority for the next stage of the school's development.

Staff are proud to work in this school and they appreciate your leadership. Professional training in areas such as the teaching of a new phonics programme is well targeted at the needs of the school and is having a good impact on pupils'

learning.

Parents are very pleased with your work and would recommend the school to others. Many said that although they were initially concerned about the move to a split site, their fears have been allayed. Typical comments from parents included: 'This is a happy and friendly place for my children to start their school life' and 'Whichever site they go to, my children cannot wait to get there.'

Pupils are proud of their school. They behave extremely well and are polite, thoughtful and caring. The school's nurturing ethos encourages pupils to mature into confident self-assured learners. They take care to present their work neatly and they work hard in lessons. The older pupils like their volunteering roles, especially when they go to help the younger children on the Harris Way site.

Pupils enjoy coming to school. They typically say, 'We make lots of friends' and 'We are like a family.' They are especially positive about the wide range of activities that take place outside lessons. Older pupils are looking forward to their residential trip. You also offer a good range of clubs to pupils. These include basketball, dough craft, cheerleading, football and a choir. The well-attended before- and after-school clubs give pupils a happy and purposeful start or end to the school day.

Pupils are pleased to share their work with visitors. Your efforts to encourage them to 'aim high' are effective. Pupils are very clear that they can achieve anything if they continue to work hard.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that records are detailed and of high quality. Staff are well trained in safeguarding procedures. They are vigilant in identifying potential problems. You and your large safeguarding team take decisive and persistent action where necessary to ensure that each individual pupil is protected. You work effectively with other agencies and parents and carers to keep pupils safe and secure.

Parents agree that their children are well cared for and are kept safe in school. They are very confident that problems, should they arise, would be tackled quickly. Your pupils are knowledgeable about the potential dangers they may face in the outside world. For example, they talk about why they should not go onto the many building sites in the village and explain clearly what they would do if they encountered a problem when using the internet. They report that, 'There is always someone to talk to if you are worried about anything.'

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection, I met with you and your heads of school to confirm the lines of enquiry for my day in school.
- The first of these looked at pupils' progress in Years 3 and 4. This was a focus because I had no pre-inspection evidence on this aspect of the school's work.

- I found that pupils make good progress across Years 3 and 4 in English and mathematics. In the current year, most pupils are already working at or beyond the expected standard for their age.
- When looking at books in Years 3 and 4, however, I saw that there is too much variation in the quality of work in science. Across the school, teachers do not have high enough expectations in this subject, resulting in pupils acquiring skills and knowledge too slowly in some classes.
- My second line of enquiry looked at how well teaching meets pupils' differing needs. This had been identified as an area for improvement in the last inspection.
- In my visits to lessons and when looking at pupils' books, I saw that teaching is pitched at the right level for different groups of pupils most of the time. There is good support both in and out of lessons for the least able, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. There is good challenge for the most able in English and mathematics, although this is less evident in science because all pupils sometimes complete the same piece of work.
- When I visited the Harris Way site, I looked in particular at the early years, and how well staff make use of outdoor facilities. Staff had been asked to improve this after the last inspection.
- I found children are well cared for and make good progress in the pre-school and Reception Year. They benefit from being able to work in purpose-built accommodation which includes well-resourced outdoor areas.
- Teachers now ensure that outdoor learning in the early years is purposeful and comprehensively covers the different areas of learning. They successfully adapt outdoor provision from year to year to take account of the differing needs of each cohort.
- My final line of enquiry looked at the school's use of the pupil premium to support disadvantaged pupils, especially the most able in mathematics. I wanted to look at this because test data suggested that disadvantaged pupils attained less well than others at the end of Year 2 in 2017.
- I saw that day-to-day practice in supporting the needs of disadvantaged pupils is effective. Consequently, most of these pupils make good progress over time. Well-targeted interventions help to improve pupils' skills. There has been a good focus on improving support for the most able disadvantaged pupils in mathematics and this is beginning to bear fruit. As a result of these changes, more of these pupils are on track to reach the higher standards by the end of the year than in 2017.
- We agreed, however, that you need to be more thorough in your analysis of the impact of the pupil premium. At the moment, this focuses too much on the proportion reaching the expected standard for their age by the end of Year 2 rather than looking in more detail at attainment in key stage 2 or at how many pupils reach the higher standards each year. This makes it difficult for you to identify with confidence which initiatives are proving most successful and which still need fine-tuning to make them more effective.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- there is a strong and effective middle leadership team so that responsibility for securing improvement is shared more widely
- teachers always expect enough of pupils in science, especially the most able
- the analysis of the use of the pupil premium is more focused on attainment and progress in key stage 2 and looks closely at the impact of spending on the most able disadvantaged pupils.

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

Yours sincerely

Mike Capper
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I made observations of teaching and learning across the school during learning walks with you and your heads of school. I held meetings with school leaders and members of the governing body. I had discussions with parents at the start of the school day and scrutinised the 120 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I analysed the 50 responses to the Ofsted staff survey and 22 to the pupil survey. I considered a range of information supplied by the school, including checks on the quality of teaching, the school's development plan, school policies and records relating to attendance and safeguarding procedures. I listened to some pupils reading in lessons, scrutinised pupils' books in different subjects and looked at school assessment information from the current academic year.