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Mr Michael Fairclough
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Fairclough

Short inspection of West Rise Junior School

Following my visit to the school on 6 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 November 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 a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Staff share your vision to provide pupils with inspirational curriculum experiences. Pupils thrive in this environment. You have developed an ethos where pupils' rights and responsibilities are at the core of all work. Teachers' morale is high. A teacher, representing the views of many, said, 'We are a supportive team; we enjoy being here.' All staff agreed that leaders do all they can to ensure that the school has a motivated, respected and effective teaching staff. In addition, staff said that they are trusted to innovate in ways that are right for the pupils to achieve well.

Pupils are very positive about the experiences they receive at school. Leaders have developed an exceptionally diverse curriculum with rich opportunities for learning out of the classroom. Teachers use the outdoor field and adjacent marsh, complete with livestock, to inspire pupils. The outdoor education programme, experienced by all pupils, enables them to learn about resilience and cooperation and apply the skills and knowledge they learn from subjects such as geography and science. Pupils I spoke with were unanimous in their appreciation of how their outdoor learning helps them. One pupil said, 'I love the 'forest school' and the marsh. It helps me to learn about being safe.' I observed pupils learning well during a session involving technology and scientific investigation. Pupils said that all outdoor learning experiences, including extra-curricular clubs and visits, help them to be better at writing imaginatively.

Parents and carers are, on the whole, fully supportive of the school and the education their child receives. One parent commented, 'Anything is possible at West Rise and any child would be lucky to pass through their doors.' Another said, 'I can't recommend West Rise Junior enough and I am proud that my daughter attends this amazing school.' These comments echo the sentiments of many parents. While several parents of children who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities commented on the good progress their children are making, there are a small number of parents who expressed concern about their child's complex needs not being met well enough. In September 2017, you appointed a new SEN coordinator who has strengthened policies and procedures to support this group of pupils. During the inspection, I found that pupils' education, health and care plans included regular meetings with parents and close liaison with other professionals, such as educational psychologists and health-service personnel. Teachers said that they receive helpful training from leaders in order to support pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.

You, your leaders and governors recognise that there is work to do to improve the school further. Most issues identified from the last inspection as needing improvement have been tackled well, such as raising the achievement of pupils. Current improvement plans are sharply focused on ensuring that pupils attend school regularly and raising achievement of the most able pupils in mathematics.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. Checks on adults' suitability to work with pupils are rigorous and documented well. Governors are skilled in their role and visit the school regularly to meet with leaders. They ensure that safeguarding procedures follow statutory guidelines well.

The school's arrangements for assessing risk are thorough. Leaders make sure that staff understand the possible hazards associated with any activities, especially those that may take place in outdoor learning activities. Pupils also understand the concept of risk as their teachers carefully brief and question pupils about safety matters. For example, when sitting by a fire, pupils discussed why they should remain a suitable distance away.

The school's records show that all concerns about pupils are rigorously followed up. The school seeks the support of other agencies when appropriate to ensure the safety of the pupils in their care. Staff have regular training so that they are knowledgeable about how to keep pupils safe from risks such as radicalisation and online dangers.

Pupils said that they feel safe at the school and that they are looked after well. Pupils and parents reported that the small amount of bullying behaviour between pupils is dealt with sensitively and swiftly by staff.

Inspection findings

- The focus of this inspection was to investigate specific areas of the school's provision, including the progress of the most able pupils in mathematics, the leadership of pupils' attendance and the effectiveness of leaders' communication with parents.
- Last academic year, most groups of pupils made strong gains from their starting points in reading, writing and mathematics. In mathematics, however, the most able pupils did not make the same strong progress. My review of pupils' work showed that these pupils have positive attitudes and take pride in their work. They learn mathematical skills and apply them accurately. However, teaching does not provide challenge straight away, and this means that pupils repeat calculations and other tasks that they have already mastered. Teachers' questioning does not deepen and extend pupils' mathematical reasoning so that they can test ideas and look for proof. This affects how quickly they make progress. Pupils said that they would relish more challenge, and leaders are committed to improving this area further.
- Pupils' attendance is improving but remains just below the national average. Leaders support families well to ensure that pupils attend regularly. They have developed clear expectations of pupils' attendance and have an imaginative range of rewards to celebrate good attendance. Various other strategies, including careful tracking of attendance and evaluation by governors, are developed well. All work on attendance is beginning to bear fruit, but progress is slow. There continue to be some pupils who miss school more regularly than they should.
- Leaders have strengthened communication with parents. They invite parents to weekly celebration assemblies and regularly encourage parents to attend sessions focused on supporting their child's learning at home. Parents said that they receive valuable information about their child's progress and that face-to-face discussions are held regularly. The vast majority of parents who expressed a view on Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, agreed that the school responds well to their concerns. Nevertheless, you and your leaders know that there are a small number of parents who continue to have anxieties about the school. You are rightly committed to building further partnerships.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teaching provides challenge at the earliest appropriate point for the most able pupils in mathematics
- the proportion of pupils who miss school regularly reduces quickly.

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

Yours sincerely

Sue Child
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection we visited classrooms together and talked to pupils about their work. I scrutinised a wide range of documentation, including information about pupils' achievement, leaders' evaluation of the school's effectiveness, governing body minutes, safeguarding checks, policies and procedures. I met with you, your deputy headteacher, the special needs coordinator, the mathematics coordinator, a group of staff and a member of the governing body. I looked at pupils' work in lessons and scrutinised a sample of the most able pupils' mathematics books. I held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. I considered 27 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire, 96 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey and 91 responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as speaking with a number of parents.