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Mr Mark Hazzard
Wootton Bassett Infants' School
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Dear Mr Hazzard

Short inspection of Wootton Bassett Infants' School

Following my visit to the school on 22 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 July 2014.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

You are justifiably proud of the strong community feel of the school, which many of the parents and carers describe as 'relaxed, friendly and cosy'. As one parent explained in the online questionnaire, 'It is a really wonderful place for children to start off their journey of education.' You and your teaching staff are justifiably proud of the rich and exciting curriculum you provide which, as many parents pointed out, helps 'children to thrive'. Art is used very effectively to stimulate and engage pupils and is skilfully woven into all aspects of the curriculum. Visits to art exhibitions, drama workshops and theatre trips enhance their experiences and extend their knowledge effectively. Pupils appreciate that their work is valued and celebrated in the vibrant displays throughout the school. Pupils have very positive attitudes to their work, and parents confirm that this creative approach develops their children's love of learning.

You, your governors and your school improvement partner have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Despite being an area for development at the previous inspection, you are fully aware that pupils' phonic skills still need to improve. This is because results in the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1 have been consistently below the national average. Improving pupils' phonic skills is a key focus of the school improvement plan. Although you have a slighter higher than average proportion of pupils who have special educational

needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, who take longer to grasp their knowledge and application of phonics confidently, you recognise that there are still too many pupils who do not make rapid enough progress in Reception and in Year 1.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and staff members receive regular safeguarding training and updates to help them keep abreast of potential emerging dangers faced by children both locally and nationally. They pass on concerns quickly to leaders who themselves work with external agencies to take appropriate actions to keep pupils safe from harm and ready to learn.

Governors are aware of their responsibility for safeguarding. Those who are involved in the interviewing of potential members of staff have participated in recent training about safer recruitment.

Pupils report that they feel safe in school and know that there is always an adult they can talk to if they have a worry or concern. They are clear that if they have an accidental bump or fall in the playground, they will be looked after well by a member of staff. Any such incidents are carefully recorded and any recurring patterns addressed. Specific events such as 'Safer Internet Day' help the pupils to understand how to use information technology safely.

The majority of parents who responded to the online inspection questionnaire agreed that their children feel safe in school. The views of many can be summed up by one parent who explained that children are always 'made to feel very welcome and safe'.

Inspection findings

- Observing high-quality phonics sessions at Pewsey Primary, a national support school, is helping to raise teachers' expectations and encourage a more consistent approach to their teaching. A new tracking system is enabling teachers to identify pupils who are in danger of falling behind in their phonics skills. These individuals are then given extra help to accelerate their progress.
- Although teachers have increased the number of phonic lessons they teach, they are still not providing the pupils with sufficient opportunities to practise the skills. You acknowledge that some lessons lack pace and, at times, there is a lack of precision in the pronunciation of the sounds.
- Another key feature of the school improvement plan is to increase the proportion of pupils who achieve the expected standard in reading by the end of Year 2. Through an analysis of your pupils' performance in the 2017 assessments, you have identified that a substantial proportion of them found it challenging to read an excerpt and then answer questions on it. In response to this, your teachers are now placing a greater emphasis on making sure that pupils receive plenty of opportunities to read and respond to questions about the text. Reading records and teacher assessments have improved in accuracy and consistency. This is ensuring that those pupils who are falling behind are quickly identified for

additional help.

- Working alongside your English leader, you are encouraging a much greater focus on the importance of books as a vehicle for learning. Most topics are based around books, and this helps the pupils make links as they learn. For example, Year 2 pupils are reading books written by Roald Dahl. Not only have they written detailed biographies about the author himself, they have created imaginative stories about the key characters and plots in the books, using a wide range of different writing styles.
- Staff use links with the local book shop well to promote reading for pleasure. Pupils appreciate the increased number of parents who come into school to help them read. They also enjoy sharing books with pupils from Royal Wootton Bassett Academy.
- Nevertheless, there remains a lack of urgency to introduce further initiatives which are identified on the improvement plans for this academic year. There has also been no regular evaluation of the impact of the initiatives that have already been introduced to improve pupils' outcomes in reading and phonics.
- During the inspection, we looked at a sample of pupils' work together. We noted that leaders were not taking responsibility for evaluating the quality of teaching and learning over time and identifying where improvements were needed.
- Although most parents who responded to the online inspection questionnaire would not hesitate to recommend Wootton Bassett Infants' School to a friend, a significant minority raised concerns about the lack of communication between home and school. In particular, some parents reported that they did not always 'feel in the loop' about the progress their children were making.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- rapidly introduce all actions identified on the school improvement plan to support the progress that pupils make in reading and phonics
- develop the skills of key subject leaders so that they contribute fully to school improvement
- improve communication between home and school so that all parents feel fully informed about the progress their children are making.

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

Yours sincerely

Lorna Brackstone
Her Majesty's Inspector
Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you to discuss the school's effectiveness. I held discussions with three governors, including the chair of the governing body. I met with your English subject leader and the school improvement officer. I met with a group of Year 2 pupils and heard them read. We visited all the classes together. I looked at a sample of Year 2 books with you. I examined documents, including information about the safeguarding of children, and the progress that they make in their learning. I also looked at the school's self-evaluation document and improvement plan. I considered 72 responses and free-text comments submitted to the inspection questionnaire, Parent View.