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Mrs Anneline Moloji  
Headteacher  
Whitehall Junior School  
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Dear Mrs Moloji

### **Short inspection of Whitehall Junior School**

Following my visit to the school on 20 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 September 2014.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Since your appointment as headteacher in September 2016, you have built on the strengths of leadership recognised at the time of the last inspection. You have struck the right balance in consolidating the best practice of your experienced leadership team while recognising when new and revised systems are needed.

By the end of year 6, pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils' achievement in mathematics is consistently above the national average. The teaching of this subject continues to be a strength of the school. You are rightly looking at what works well in mathematics, for example the effectiveness of staff training, to match this success in reading and writing. The quality of pupils' writing continues to be a focus for you. While there have been some improvements, the proportion of pupils attaining the expected standard in 2017 was below average. You also recognise that the attainment of disadvantaged pupils continues to lag behind others, especially in reading and writing.

All members of your leadership team are knowledgeable, experienced and very well placed to hold teachers to account for the quality of their teaching. Leaders have benefited from their continued work with the Quest partnership of schools. You are extending these valuable opportunities to develop their expertise further by working with other schools and sharing good practice. Your close liaison with the adjacent infant school and plans to further carry out joint moderation of pupils' writing are beneficial and you are well prepared to cater for individual pupils' needs when they

join the junior school.

While drawing effectively on the specialisms of your team, you are proactive in seeking and responding to external advice in your drive for further improvements. You identified when teachers' use of assessment needed to improve. Advice and training have meant assessments are now more accurate and enable leaders to keep a close eye on the achievement of individual pupils and groups. You have high expectations so that teachers are very clear what help individual pupils need to succeed. You have introduced new systems to facilitate this, looking at the combination of factors that might be barriers to pupils fulfilling their potential. When you identify that pupils are not on track to achieve as well as they should, you make sure they receive the extra help and encouragement they need to catch up.

Leaders have an accurate view of strengths in the school and areas needing further improvement. You have taken into account the increased size of the school and the continued wide range of first languages spoken by your pupils. You deploy your staff thoughtfully and effectively. All staff who completed the survey for this inspection agreed that leaders support them and treat them fairly and with respect. Staff are proud to work at the school.

You maintain the school's vision of 'happiness at the heart of learning' within your improvement planning. You convey a sense of welcome at the school. You give smart planners to pupils to help them to organise their work and become familiar with the school's routines. This is especially important for the growing number of pupils who join and leave the school through the year because of the relocation of their homes. Parents and carers appreciate the approachability of leaders, who are visible at the school gate. Parents comment on how quickly their child settled at the school. The large majority of pupils who completed the survey for this inspection, and those I met with, told me how much they enjoyed coming to school. They said they would recommend it to others.

Governors benefit from being able to draw upon their extensive experience of the school, gained over several years, and being able to apply their professional backgrounds to fulfilling their responsibilities. They attend training to fill any gaps in their expertise. They are knowledgeable about the day-to-day running of the school and apply this effectively to their strategic planning and regular meetings with leaders. They oversee how the pupil premium grant is allocated and regularly review this so that the difference it makes to individual pupils is clear. Governors are working hard to boost communications with parents and to recruit more parents on to the governing body.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders' safeguarding records, including those relating to the recruitment of staff, are well organised and fit for purpose. You recently commissioned an external audit to ensure that your safeguarding practices are of a high standard. Regular refresher training ensures that staff and governors are aware of, and fulfil, their safeguarding responsibilities, and can apply their training to their day-to-day routines.

Staff are alert to signs of concern and follow clear referral processes. Leaders oversee productive links with outside agencies to help pupils receive the support they need. Leaders ensure that appropriate procedures are followed when pupils no longer attend the school. Leaders are vigilant to the risks of pupils going missing from education, radicalisation and female genital mutilation.

Pupils have regular opportunities in lessons, assemblies and at special events to learn about keeping safe. They know about risks in the local community and when working online. Pupils told me they feel safe in school. Parents and staff, responding to surveys, agree that pupils are kept safe in school.

### **Inspection findings**

- We agreed a first line of enquiry to look at actions leaders have taken to improve the quality of pupils' writing across the school. This was an area for improvement in the previous inspection report and continues to be a focus area in your school improvement plan. Achievement information also indicates that boys have been doing less well than girls.
- Since the last inspection, leaders have implemented a number of initiatives that have been successful in improving the quality of pupils' writing. Leaders have thoughtfully adapted different schemes to develop key aspects of pupils' writing, for example comprehension, grammar and vocabulary. You have revised the timetable so that pupils have more lessons and activities that focus specifically on these skills. The books that pupils read in lessons more closely follow topics in English to help pupils apply their new vocabulary to their writing.
- Leaders consider ways in which teachers can motivate pupils' extended writing and adapt the curriculum accordingly. Pupils write enthusiastically about real-life scenarios, as well as trips chosen to inspire their interests.
- Leaders model good practice and deliver training to improve the quality of the teaching of writing. The approach to teaching grammar is effective, for example by looking at examples in popular culture, and has been successful in enabling boys to catch up with girls. Pupils talked about how teachers make their lessons fun and were able to tell me about their learning. They enjoy challenge but sometimes find work too easy.
- As a second line of enquiry, we agreed to look at the attainment of disadvantaged pupils, which tends to lag behind that of others.
- The support and oversight of provision for disadvantaged pupils are well led.
- Leaders ensure that teachers have knowledge of, and understand, the barriers to learning of disadvantaged pupils in their classes, many of whom have a range of complex needs.
- Leaders know individual pupils well and carefully monitor their progress. Teachers plan and hold regular one-to-one discussions with disadvantaged pupils. Teachers use information about pupils' aspirations and specific barriers to their learning to support them in key areas relating to their learning, social

environment, family circumstances and extra-curricular opportunities. Support for disadvantaged pupils is tailored accordingly. For example, reading groups targeting higher-ability pupils have led to the gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers closing. 'Hub groups' provide an environment in which pupils develop their independence, boost their self-esteem and focus better on their work.

- Leaders are establishing closer communications with parents and run workshops for those whose children are receiving additional support so that parents can help their learning at home. Groups to support parents who speak English as an additional language are also well received. Leaders thoughtfully provide additional opportunities for pupils to access literature at home to promote their interest in reading.
- We agreed a third line of enquiry, to consider your actions to reduce pupils' persistent absence, as this was above average in 2017.
- Leaders have well-organised systems to monitor pupils' attendance. Alongside close knowledge of individual family circumstances, and efficient communications, absences are followed up swiftly.
- The attendance team goes to great lengths to support individual pupils, who now have a more positive attitude to coming to school. Your staff use some thoughtful initiatives to encourage and reward their better attendance, for example by building on a pupil's interests.
- Levels of persistent absence have reduced as a result of specific support related to pupils' individual circumstances. A range of strategies and opportunities, such as a nurture group, also help to improve pupils' attitudes to their education, so that they are more motivated to attend regularly.
- Leaders liaise appropriately with outside agencies in their work with harder-to-reach families. You make clear your expectations about good attendance. The high profile of leaders at the start and the end of the day helps leaders to engage with parents and has been effective in reducing persistent absence.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to develop greater consistency and accuracy in the use of assessment to make sure that pupils move on to more challenging work when they are ready and receive the support they need to make progress
- they continue to reduce levels of persistent absence.

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

Yours sincerely

Amanda Carter-Fraser  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with you and other school leaders. I also met with the chair of governors and two other governors. Leaders accompanied me as I toured the school, visiting all classrooms. I held informal conversations with staff and pupils and also met with a group of pupils. I looked at pupils' work. I evaluated a range of the school's documentation, including its self-evaluation, achievement information, and records relating to the safeguarding of pupils and the support for disadvantaged pupils. I took into account the responses to surveys completed by 36 members of staff and 71 pupils. I also considered the 37 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire.