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4 June 2018

Miss Denise Mawdsley
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Dear Miss Mawdsley

Short inspection of Wedmore First School Academy

Following my visit to the school on 2 May 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 June 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 in November 2017, you have led and supported staff with determination and enthusiasm. 'It's fun to learn' is the school's motto and you work closely with your deputy and other leaders to ensure that pupils' experiences reflect this ambition.

You are resolute in your determination to ensure that pupils achieve high academic standards. Working closely with personnel from the Wessex Learning Trust, you have facilitated good-quality training and support for staff. This has quickly strengthened the leadership team and ensured that actions taken to bring about school improvement are succeeding. School governors are passionate about securing the school's success. They have embraced training opportunities and provide the right balance of challenge and support. There is a strong team feeling and commitment within the school to securing a high-quality education for all pupils.

Recent changes to staffing at the school are a cause of uncertainty for some parents and carers. However, most parents who spoke with me during the inspection, and those who responded online, express confidence in the school and the 'new impetus and drive' you have brought. Parents are confident that their children are happy and well taught and make good progress at school. Pupils enjoy school. 'School is fun because we meet new people, get to play with our friends and

learn new things every day' was a comment from one pupil that reflects the views of many who spoke with me. They identify many 'best things' about school, including reading, tackling mathematics problems and school trips, which they think are 'exciting'.

At the previous inspection, school leaders were asked to ensure that activities in lessons moved pupils' learning on at a faster rate. High-quality training for teachers has ensured that they have an improved understanding of the expectations for different subjects and year groups. As a result, teaching takes good account of pupils' current positions, and activities move pupils' learning on well.

Leaders were also asked to ensure that middle leaders contributed more to evaluating the impact of teaching on pupils' progress and attainment. Checks confirm that pupils typically make good progress in reading in all year groups, with many achieving the higher standard. Stronger leadership has improved the teaching of mathematics. This is leading to more pupils making at least good progress this year, and an increasing proportion achieving the higher standard. You are aware, however, that fewer pupils make good progress in writing, particularly in the Nursery and Years 3 and 4.

Safeguarding is effective.

All safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Records are meticulously maintained and you make appropriate checks on staff before they start their employment at the school. Leaders have created a culture where safeguarding is at the core of the school's activities. Effective training ensures that staff are vigilant and have a good understanding of the potential risks pupils may face. You take prompt action when you have concerns about pupils' safety and welfare, and work closely with external agencies to support pupils and their families.

Pupils feel safe at school. They know how to keep themselves safe in the community and who to talk to if they have any personal concerns. They gave me useful advice on how to stay safe when using modern technology. Pupils are polite and well mannered. They said that they enjoy being with their friends and that the vast majority of pupils behave well. They are confident that adults in school 'are very kind' and look after them well. Parents are confident that their children are safe and well looked after at school.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection, we agreed to focus on three particular aspects of the school's work.
- The first line of enquiry considered if children in the Nursery and Reception classes could make better progress so that more exceed the expected level of development in writing and mathematics.
- You and the leader for the early years have identified that the procedures used to assess children in the Nursery and Reception classes are not fully aligned. Consequently, it is difficult to evaluate the progress made by children from their

starting point in the Nursery through to the end of Reception. In the Nursery, children make good progress in most areas but, for some, the development of the skills needed to write is too slow. In the Reception class, the effective teaching of phonics makes a strong contribution to the good progress children make in learning to write, although few make sufficiently rapid progress to enable them to exceed the expected level.

- Children make good progress in mathematics in the Nursery and Reception classes. Staff make good use of practical resources to help children to count and calculate accurately. They place a strong emphasis on ensuring that children develop a good understanding of mathematical vocabulary. Activities that interest and engage children provide them with the opportunity to learn about numbers and shapes in a practical way. For example, in the Nursery, children enjoyed 'working in the builder's yard'. Adult interaction supported children to count accurately and to explore the properties of shapes and how they fit together as children created their constructions.
- Next, we focused on how well disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities make progress through the early years and key stage 1 in writing and mathematics.
- Assessment information and pupils' current work show that the vast majority of disadvantaged pupils make good, and sometimes rapid, progress in writing and mathematics. Teaching takes account of pupils' individual strengths and weaknesses and provides them with an appropriate balance of challenge and support. Skilled teaching assistants, working closely with teachers, provide targeted, effective support for pupils who require specific help to overcome difficulties with their learning.
- The special educational needs coordinator has ensured that all staff are well trained. They are quick to identify any pupils experiencing difficulties with their personal or academic development. Plans to support these pupils are drawn up and implemented swiftly. The impact of actions taken is evaluated thoroughly. Where appropriate, the school accesses the assistance of outside agencies and experts to ensure that pupils receive the extra help they need. Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities typically make good progress through the early years and key stage 1 in writing and mathematics because of the individualised support they receive.
- Finally, I considered if pupils in Years 3 and 4 make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics, and are well prepared for moving on from the school into Year 5. As with other year groups, pupils' reading is a strength in Years 3 and 4. Pupils read a range of texts and develop good comprehension skills. Many pupils achieve the higher standard in reading. Changes made to teaching are helping pupils to be more confident in their mathematics work. Pupils make good use of practical resources to explore the different ways to complete calculations. They talk about their mathematics work and give reasons why they have chosen a particular approach when completing mathematical challenges. This is reinforcing pupils' understanding so that more are making good progress and achieving the higher standard this year.
- You are aware that pupils' progress in writing in Years 3 and 4 is slower than in

other subjects, and you are taking action to raise the expectations of what pupils can achieve. In particular, pupils are being challenged to spell with greater accuracy and use a wider range of punctuation correctly. More opportunities to write in other subjects are ensuring that pupils' work has relevance and that they have the time to practise particular forms of writing, such as letters and poetry.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they develop and establish an assessment system that enables children's progress to be checked effectively through the Nursery and Reception classes
- children in the Nursery make good progress in writing
- pupils' progress in writing in Years 3 and 4 improves quickly so that more achieve the higher standard.

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

Yours sincerely

Alison Cogher
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, various school leaders, members of the local governing board, including the vice-chair, the executive headteacher and chair of the Wessex Learning Trust, and your school improvement partner. I visited classes with you and your deputy headteacher. We looked at samples of pupils' work and the school's assessment information on the progress being made by current pupils.

I talked to pupils at break and lunchtime and during lessons. I gathered views from parents at the start of the school day and took account of the 48 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. I reviewed the free-text responses from parents and the results of the staff questionnaire. I looked at documents relating to safeguarding, the school's evaluation of its own performance and plans for improvement. I reviewed the school's and the Wessex Learning Trust's websites. I also considered information about the school's academic performance.