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Mrs Rachel Olivant
Headteacher
Woodwater Academy
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Dear Mrs Olivant

Short inspection of Woodwater Academy

Following my visit to the school on 3 July 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 2015.

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 led the school with positivity, empathy and commitment. Since your appointment as substantive headteacher in 2017, you have created a school culture with a strong sense of purpose and high expectations for staff and pupils. You are ably supported by middle leaders and the trust in your drive to improve the school further. Pupils achieve well at Woodwater Academy. Staff, governors, parents and carers have confidence in the school's leadership.

You have an accurate and realistic understanding of the school's current performance. Your plans clearly set out what needs to improve with specific and measurable targets that help to secure positive changes. For example, you have been taking action to increase the proportion of the most able pupils who achieve the highest standards. This was a recommendation from the previous inspection. In the 2017 tests, a greater proportion of the most able pupils achieved the higher levels than did so nationally in reading, writing and mathematics. Admirably, you are ambitious to increase the proportion of pupils who are able to work at higher levels across the whole school.

You are aware that leaders need to continue to improve the achievement of disadvantaged pupils. You have improved the way the school supports these pupils and promotes their self-confidence. As a result, the progress made by disadvantaged pupils is improving, particularly in reading in key stage 2. However, there is still some way to go to narrow gaps in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and their peers.

Since the last inspection, pupils have continued to make good progress across a broad range of subjects. From low starting points, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development by the end of their time in the early years is in line with the national average. An above average proportion of pupils reach the required standard in the phonics screening check by the end of Year 1 and Year 2. You and other leaders have correctly identified that some pupils in lower key stage 2 do not achieve as well as they might in writing and have plans in place that are helping to extend pupils' vocabulary.

Pupils present as happy, eager individuals who enjoy learning and behave well. They play together cheerfully and enthusiastically at playtimes and work cooperatively during lessons. Pupils enjoy the challenges teachers set them to develop their learning further, as illustrated by one pupil who said: 'If you get things right then the teachers give you thought-provoking questions to answer.' The school environment is bright and cheerful, with celebrations of pupils' achievements across all areas of the curriculum. The close involvement of parents in their children's learning is very evident from the moment their child starts school.

Parents are highly supportive of the school. Most parents who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, would recommend the school. They agree that their child is taught well and is making good progress in school. Typical comments include: 'My child loves going to Woodwater Academy and I feel this is a great reflection on how good the teachers are, the interesting subjects and topics they are taught and the different methods of learning to suit all abilities.' Parents also affirm that 'the staff are always there for any concerns and will make time to listen'. Your dedicated promotion of the school's values of 'Teamwork, Respect, Ambition, Courage and Kindness' underpins the work of the school.

Safeguarding is effective.

You, the governors and the trust have created a very strong culture for safeguarding within the school. Records and systems for protecting pupils, including employment checks on the suitability of adults to work in school, are rigorous. You ensure that all staff receive regular, up-to-date training on safeguarding and that they know what to do if they have a concern about a child. Records show that concerns are reported promptly and fully. You liaise well with external agencies when appropriate, so that pupils get the extra care they need.

Parents recognise the lengths you go to in order to provide a welcoming and inclusive environment for all pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. You monitor pupils' behaviour well and use this information to provide additional support for vulnerable pupils. An example of this is allocating these pupils a familiar, named adult to go to at playtimes should they feel upset or worried in any way. You have shown resilience and determination to ensure that pupils' well-being is paramount within a truly inclusive school.

Inspection findings

- At the beginning of the inspection, we agreed on the lines of enquiry to consider. I checked the effectiveness of leaders in ensuring that the good start children achieve in the foundation stage is continued throughout the school. I explored how effectively leaders are improving outcomes for vulnerable and disadvantaged pupils. In addition, I looked at how leaders ensure that the most able pupils are challenged in their learning to achieve the higher standards.
- Teachers evaluate pupils' starting points precisely at the beginning of each new academic year. They identify areas of learning that are most important to support pupils' progress. Teachers then devise learning plans to ensure that all groups of pupils make good progress in a range of curriculum areas throughout the year. Subjects are taught through topic work that engages and excites pupils in their learning, instilling a high level of challenge.
- Pupils' writing is a focus for the school and teachers have recently implemented a consistent approach to developing pupils' handwriting. This is improving the presentation in books, as well as helping to develop a more fluent sentence structure in writing.
- Over time, disadvantaged pupils have not achieved as well as other pupils nationally. You and your leadership team have been addressing this with relentless determination since your appointment. You have a very clear understanding of the barriers to learning of your disadvantaged pupils in school and have a range of carefully planned interventions which are delivered effectively by highly skilled teachers and teaching assistants. Staff evaluate these interventions and adapt them accordingly. However, this is not yet making a difference in all year groups and subjects across the school. For some of the more vulnerable pupils, the gaps between their achievement and that of other pupils nationally are narrowing too slowly.
- The proportions of most-able pupils reaching the higher standards in Year 2 and Year 6 compare favourably with the national averages in reading, writing and mathematics. However, this is not consistently the case for some most-able pupils in writing in Years 3 and 4 across different subjects. Where the progress of most-able pupils is rapid, teachers are very skilled in asking questions which extend pupils' vocabulary, both during lessons and in written comments in books.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they further increase the proportions of disadvantaged pupils who attain national standards in reading, writing and mathematics so that they are in line with national averages
- they increase the proportion of pupils in Years 3 and 4 who achieve the higher levels in writing by improving the quality of vocabulary used in their written work across the curriculum.

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

Yours sincerely

Julie Jane
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you, your senior and middle leaders, governors, a representative from the Ventrus multi-academy trust, staff and pupils. We visited lessons jointly to observe learning and we discussed the school's curriculum and pupils' progress. I looked at pupils' workbooks together with senior leaders. I considered documentary evidence, including the school's development plan, self-evaluation document, safeguarding documents and attendance information. I spoke to a group of pupils, as well as in lessons, about their work. I took account of 49 responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, including 22 free-text comments. I also spoke to parents as they dropped off their children at the beginning of the school day.