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Mr Edward Caines
Principal
Woodside Academy
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Dear Mr Caines

Short inspection of Woodside Academy

Following my visit to the school on 18 July 2018 with Wayne Harris, Ofsted Inspector, 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 previous inspection. Since then, you have appointed a new vice principal from within your school leadership team, who has been in post since Easter 2017. Currently, you are expanding the size and leadership capacity of your senior team for September 2018 to reflect the school's expansion. The school has continued to grow over time and pupil numbers are close to full capacity. The many strengths identified in the 2014 inspection remain.

I was impressed with the many good-quality displays that you have around the school. Each one demonstrates the numerous and varied activities that pupils experience. You are rightly proud of the many activities your staff provide for pupils after school. Pupils have a wealth of opportunity to develop their skills in sport. During the inspection, pupils represented their houses in the key stage 2 sporting event that was held on the field. They wore their house colours with pride.

Pupils have a clear love of learning and work well in class, trying their best to complete their activities. Nearly all the pupils who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire stated that they enjoy their learning and that adults help them learn about treating everyone equally. Pupils spoken with were enthusiastic about their school and said that teachers listen to their views. Equally, most staff who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire during the inspection are proud to work at the school and feel well supported.

Most parents who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, say their child is happy and well looked after at Woodside Academy. One parent echoed the sentiments of many others who used the free-text message service during the inspection, saying, 'Both my children love this school. Teachers are always there to help and support.' Another parent stated, 'This is a fantastic school that creates an inclusive environment for its learners to thrive.'

Attendance remains close to the national average and has been consistently so since the previous inspection. Your staff continue to work hard supporting families who require further help and guidance with their child's attendance.

There have been several changes to the governing body since the previous inspection. Governors continue to develop and improve their strategic overview of the school. Under the guidance of the chair of the governing body, governors are becoming better skilled at holding school leaders to account for increasing pupils' achievement. However, some inconsistencies remain in the way leaders and governors review whole-school policies and ensure that the school website is kept up to date with the most recent statutory guidance.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have been successful in creating a safe and caring environment in which most pupils and staff have confidence and feel valued. You ensure that staff are well trained and that procedures are fit for purpose.

Pupils spoken with and those who offered their views on the pupil questionnaire stated that they felt safe at school. Pupils have an accurate understanding of what bullying is and what it is not. Although there were some mixed responses from parents regarding how well leaders deal with concerns about bullying, inspectors did not find any well-founded concerns. Pupils could name a person that they would be happy to speak with if they were concerned or worried.

You have suitable recording systems in place for the appropriate recruitment of staff. Records are well kept and where there are concerns raised of a child protection nature, these are dealt with promptly and appropriately.

Although safeguarding and child protection practice in school is robust, governors have not checked the website well enough to make sure that the good practice in school is communicated effectively to parents and carers. Consequently, some policies available on the school website are not compliant with statutory guidance.

Inspection findings

- Our first line of enquiry was to evaluate how well the most able pupils achieve by the end of key stage 2. This was because this aspect was an area for improvement identified in the previous inspection. In both 2016 and 2017, the most able pupils in key stage 2 made less progress from their higher starting points, particularly in reading.

- The quality of leadership in English is strong. Subject leaders have an accurate view of what is working well and where the quality of provision needs to improve further. Over this academic year, the focus has been to improve the achievement that the most able pupils make. Leaders have introduced new assessment material to more accurately analyse and measure the progress these pupils make, particularly in reading.
- Workbooks show that there are more pupils across the school who are provided with the opportunity to write at greater depth and that pupils have responded well to the higher expectations. In Year 6 this year, you have changed the way that pupils are taught. Pupils have received precise and strong teaching over this year that has met their individual needs well. Provisional results by the end of key stage 2 show that the proportion of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, who have reached the higher standard in reading, writing and mathematics has risen this year. Teachers in upper key stage 2 are relentless in ensuring that pupils make as much progress as they can so that they will be prepared for secondary school.
- Equally, by the end of Year 2, pupils have many opportunities to write at length and increase their skills across a range of subjects. Consequently, more pupils are showing that they are writing at a greater depth than is the expected standard for their age. However, the good provision for writing in key stage 1 and upper key stage 2 is not as effective in Years 3 and 4. Evidence from pupils' books demonstrates that the progress that the most able pupils make starts to slow in lower key stage 2.
- Another line of enquiry was to evaluate the quality of teaching in early reading, starting from the early years classes. This was because the proportion of disadvantaged children who leave early years reaching the early learning goal for reading has been much lower than the national average for a few years. Similarly, in the Year 1 phonics screening check, pupils' attainment has not been consistently good over time.
- Pupils who read to inspectors were fluent and used their knowledge and understanding of sounds well to read unfamiliar words. The books available to take home are generally appropriate for the age and stage of pupils. When asked questions about their reading, most pupils understood the texts well, giving suitable answers.
- The leadership of early reading and phonics is relatively new and becoming increasingly strong. This year, there has been a focus on improving the quality and consistency of teaching in early reading. Provisional results in the 2018 Year 1 phonics screening check show that the proportion of pupils who have reached the expectations of the check are in line with the national average.
- However, pupils' achievement could be even better in reading. Further plans are in place to improve how adults use the information they have about children's reading in the early years, but this is not yet in place. Currently, the changes that have been introduced this academic year have not yet ensured a systematic approach in teaching reading from Nursery through to Year 1 to maximise pupils' achievement.

- We considered the quality of teaching in other subjects across the curriculum such as science as our final key line of enquiry. The proportion of pupils who reached the expected standard in science, by the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2, increased between 2016 and 2017 from below national averages to in line with national averages in 2017. We wanted to check whether this improvement has sustained and that more pupils are now making good or better progress.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in subjects such as science is mixed. Where teaching over time is strong, pupils' books show that they receive a clear sequence of learning activities that helps them develop their knowledge and skills. In these classes, pupils have opportunity to practise their scientific understanding in practical experiments observations. However, this good practice is not consistent in all year groups. Consequently, it is difficult to accurately assess how well adults ensure that pupils build on their knowledge and skills as they move through the school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they sharpen the processes and procedures for reviewing whole-school policies and practices so that all policies are up to date and in line with relevant statutory guidance
- the most able pupils continue to make the progress of which they are capable in lower key stage 2
- more pupils make good progress in subjects such as science
- more disadvantaged children gain their reading skills from the early years classes, so they have a greater understanding and application of phonics skills by the end of Year 1.

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

Yours sincerely

Kim Hall
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

- During the inspection, we held meetings with you, the vice principal, the coordinator for special educational needs and/or disabilities, the leaders for mathematics and English, the phonics leader, the school office personnel, and three representatives of the governing body, including the chair of the governing body.

- We gathered a range of evidence to judge the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. This included observations of teaching and learning in every year group. We evaluated pupils' current work across a range of subjects and a wide range of abilities.
- We scrutinised a variety of sources of information, including your self-evaluation, a sample of assessment information, governors' minutes of meetings and documents relating to attendance and behaviour.
- We spoke informally and formally with pupils during lessons and at lunchtime to consider their views. Their views were also considered from the 102 responses to the pupil online questionnaire.
- Policies and procedures for safeguarding pupils were examined, including mandatory checks made during the recruitment of new staff and referrals made to external agencies. A discussion was held with the vice principal as the designated safeguarding lead.
- We took account of the 49 parent responses that were provided during the inspection time to the online survey, Parent View, together with 29 free-text comments.
- The views of staff were considered from 11 responses to the staff online questionnaire.