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Ms Michelle Kenny
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Kenny

Short inspection of Whiteheath Junior School

Following my visit to the school on 2 October 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 December 2014.

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 established a team of school leaders who work with enthusiasm and expertise to create a positive learning environment. You and your governors recently restructured the leadership team. You appointed new leaders in English and mathematics. This led to initiatives which have improved the way pupils learn in these subjects. This is reflected in the comment made by a parent. She wrote, 'My children thoroughly enjoy being at Whiteheath, where they have grown in confidence and developed well academically.'

The school has addressed the areas for improvement from the previous inspection. All pupils, including the most able, benefit from the school's involvement with the local mathematics hub. This has allowed pupils to develop their skills of enquiry and investigation in mathematics. Training for staff has enabled them to ask challenging questions and set the appropriate level of work for the most able pupils. You now work more closely with the infant school. For example, your share a reading scheme and work together on mathematics skills. This allows you to build effectively upon the work pupils do in key stage 1. Leaders are aware that the recent strategies to improve pupils' writing skills need longer to embed.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your staff have created a climate where pupils feel safe. Staff receive appropriate training on a range of safeguarding issues and they know the procedure

for reporting concerns. The school works well with the local authority and the infant school to keep children safe. Pupils say that they are safe in school and they have had appropriate advice on keeping safe online. Through themed assemblies and a personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme pupils are taught how to keep safe travelling to school and in the local area. Pupils say that bullying is rare and swiftly dealt with by staff if it does occur. A high proportion of parents, carers and staff who responded to the Ofsted surveys say that pupils are safe.

Inspection findings

- In addition to evaluating the school's safeguarding arrangements, we also agreed on three key lines of enquiry for this inspection.
- The first of these was to look at how effectively leaders improve the quality of teaching in writing. This was chosen because although writing attainment has been well above national averages for the past three years, pupils have not made the progress of their peers nationally. This has been particularly the case for the most able pupils.
- Leaders have made changes to the teaching of writing. For example, a greater emphasis is placed on the teaching of grammar. Staff use strategies to help pupils plan and redraft before writing at greater depth. As a result, pupils are given the opportunity to correct errors and share ideas before they begin more formal writing. Your own assessments suggest that this new initiative has not yet had an impact on overall progress in writing for pupils, particularly the most able.
- Pupils are given opportunities to write in greater depth in other subjects across the curriculum, for example in history. Pupils write imaginative diary entries in their work studying World War II. They are learning to use vocabulary specific to subjects such as science in their writing. For example, in Year 5 classrooms, pupils were describing life cycles with confident and accurate use of scientific vocabulary.
- Leaders moderate pupils' writing with other schools to ensure that it is of the appropriate standard. They work with the infant school to build upon pupils' writing skills on entry to the school.
- Work in pupils' books shows that not all write neatly and accurately. In some classes, handwriting is not formed neatly and spelling patterns not mastered.
- A second key line of enquiry was to consider the actions leaders take to improve reading. This line of enquiry was chosen to show the positive impact of leaders' work.
- Pupils spoke positively about 'guided reading' sessions in classrooms and how this encourages them to widen their vocabulary. Pupils use their class and school libraries regularly. They enjoy a reading scheme where they can read more-demanding fiction. The school is putting more emphasis on pupils being able to infer meaning from books. This was seen in activities in classrooms, for example, in Year 3 with their reading of a book called 'Flotsam'. Pupils completed a task where they used clues to find out about a character or event in the book.

- Pupils are given the list of books they are encouraged to read before they leave the school. The list includes challenging books which appeal to different groups of pupils. This is colourfully displayed in a corridor. Leaders foster a culture where reading is seen as important and fun. Books are a very visible part of the fabric of the school, and pupils say that they see the value of reading.
- Leaders have put in place training for staff to enable them to plan learning to improve pupils' reading skills. Pupils read confidently and with expression in class. These strategies have had a positive effect on pupils' outcomes in reading, particularly for the most able pupils.
- The final key line of enquiry was to look at how leaders ensure that the wider curriculum is preparing pupils for their next steps.
- The school has a clear rationale for its curriculum, whereby pupils are offered a wide range of experiences which focus on acquiring knowledge and skills. This is intended to extend their understanding of themselves and the world in which they live. This is seen in English lessons, for example, where pupils look at environmental issues. It is seen in science classrooms, where pupils are taught about life cycles. Pupils' history books show that they learn about how the past influences their lives today.
- Extra-curricular activities are also strong. Sports and music make an important contribution to the life of the school. The school choir and orchestra perform regularly, including at the secondary school music concert last term. 'The concerts are brilliant', a Year 5 pupil told me. Weekly singing assemblies reflect the importance leaders place on music for pupils. Leaders provide opportunities for pupils to participate in a wide range of sports. Pupils compete successfully at both local and national level. The school has a 'daily mile' event, where pupils are encouraged to walk or run a mile every day before school. An annual sports week, in addition to links with local clubs, also encourages pupils to be active.
- Leaders' planning for the wider curriculum is effective. Leaders in history, computing and Spanish, for example, showed me how the school develops pupils' skills and knowledge in these subjects. There is evidence from pupils' books that they make good progress over time in these subjects. When I met with pupils, they spoke confidently about their work and the knowledge they had gained. For example, some pupils spoke confidently using basic Spanish. Others spoke about the theme days, such as the 'Brazil day', where they learn about the history, geography and culture of a different country.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they improve further the quality of teaching in writing so that the school enables the most able pupils to access more challenging work.

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

Stephen Adamson
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Learning walks and visits to classrooms were undertaken with you and your school leaders. A meeting was held with pupils from Years 4 to 6. Meetings were held with school leaders and members of the governing body. I had a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority. Information provided by the school was looked at, including assessment information, self-evaluation, improvement plans, schemes of work and curriculum plans. I also looked at information on the school's safeguarding arrangements. I considered 94 responses to Parent View, along with 28 responses to the staff survey, 51 responses to the pupil survey and one parental letter.