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Amy Rowley-Jones
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Dear Mrs Rowley-Jones

Short inspection of Walderslade Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 21 November 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in May 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 and your leadership team provide strong leadership for the school. You and your team lead by example, setting equally high expectations for staff, pupils and for yourselves. You all make sure that the school provides a bright, attractive and well-resourced learning environment for pupils and staff.

You and your leadership team have secured notable improvements in the school's work during the past year. Developments in teaching have improved the quality of pupils' learning and the revised curriculum contributes well to pupils' enjoyment of school.

You have improved assessment procedures during the past year. A sharper focus on how well different groups are learning ensures that teachers have a more accurate view of pupils' progress. They plan learning increasingly well to build on pupils' individual needs. As a result, pupils make good progress in English, mathematics and in other subjects. Standards have risen across the school during the past year and continue to rise. However, you are not complacent. You realise that recent improvements to phonics teaching now need to be fully embedded.

You and your team are now determined to ensure that teaching secures consistently high standards for the most able pupils in English, mathematics and a range of subjects. You have already made a good start in developing this aspect of the school's work. For example, you have recently given your assistant headteacher

specific responsibility for making sure that the most able pupils achieve well. As a result, teachers are more aware of the needs of the most able pupils. The work in pupils' books indicates that teachers are already providing work which is beginning to challenge and extend the most able pupils more effectively than before.

Warm and respectful relationships throughout the school make a strong contribution to pupils' learning and well-being. Pupils are enthusiastic learners and behave consistently well during lessons. They are exceptionally polite and understandably proud of their school.

Pupils move between lessons sensibly, greeting adults and each other with friendly smiles. They carry out roles of responsibility, such as holding school doors open for their classmates at the end of playtimes, sensibly and cheerfully.

You have addressed the key issues raised at the time of the inspection of your predecessor school in full:

- regular opportunities for pupils to use a range of technology supports the development of pupils' technology skills well and ensure that learning is meaningful and engaging
- developments in mathematics teaching ensure that pupils develop reliable strategies for solving mathematical problems
- substantial developments in the use of the early years outdoor area ensure that children have plenty of opportunities to develop independence and confidence while having fun and learning.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your team give pupils' safety an appropriately high priority. You are continually alert to pupils' needs and act quickly if you have any concerns about pupils' safety. Strong links with agencies, such as children's services, and detailed safeguarding records, enable you to support and monitor pupils' safety and well-being closely and effectively.

You and your team ensure that safeguarding policies and procedures are fit for purpose and followed consistently throughout the school. Regular training, bulletins and meetings ensure that all members of staff are knowledgeable about safeguarding and know what to do if they have any worries about a pupil. You and your team make sure that all recruitment checks are completed promptly so that pupils are able to learn in a safe and secure environment.

Parents are confident that adults in school take good care of their children and pupils say that they feel safe.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection I focused on how well teaching builds and extends pupils' reading and mathematics skills, particularly during key stages 1 and 2.

- Pupils make good progress in reading during both key stages and achieve well. In 2018, the proportions of pupils achieving the expected standard in reading were above the national average at the end of key stage 1 and 2. However, the proportions of pupils achieving the higher standard in reading were below the national average at both key stages. Leaders have already identified that the most able pupils could achieve more in reading and have suitable plans for development in place.
- During the past year, leaders have increased the number and range of good quality books available for pupils to read. Pupils can choose from a wide selection of books which appeal to all tastes, interests and abilities. As a result, pupils' enjoyment of reading has increased during recent months.
- In the past, inconsistencies in phonics teaching led to variations in pupils' phonics skills. Consequently, the results of the Year 1 phonics check have fluctuated over the past few years and, in 2018, dipped to below the national average. Leaders have rightly identified the teaching of phonics as a priority for school development. They have already provided good-quality training which has brought rapid improvements in the teaching of phonics. Leaders continue to improve this aspect of the school's work, making sure that improvements in phonics teaching are fully established.
- Improvements in assessment procedures have ensured that teachers have a much clearer view of pupils' progress in reading, including phonics, than before. Teachers use information about pupils' learning increasingly well to plan activities which strengthen and extend pupils' reading skills.
- Leaders have revised and updated the teaching of mathematics during the past year to reflect the higher expectations of the national curriculum. As a result, pupils in all year groups make stronger progress in mathematics than previously. They develop a secure grasp of mathematics and learn how to use a range of strategies to tackle mathematical problems with increasing success.
- Effective training and the sharing of good practice during the past year has strengthened teachers' understanding of how to challenge the most able pupils in mathematics. The work in pupils' books indicates marked improvements in pupils' ability and willingness to tackle difficult problems. However, this aspect of the school's work continues to be a focus because, despite improvements, too few of the most able pupils achieve the highest standards in mathematics at the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils develop phonics skills consistently well during key stage 1
- the most able pupils achieve as well as they should in English, mathematics and 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 Medway. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Julie Sackett
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I visited all classes with you and a representative of the academy trust. I spoke with pupils about their work and looked at pupils' books during my visits to the classrooms. I also looked separately at a sample of pupils' workbooks.

I met with you and with other senior leaders during the inspection. I also met with two governors, including the chair of governors. I met with three trustees, including the chief executive officer of the academy trust. I talked with pupils during the lunchtime break and spoke informally with parents at the end of the school day. I took account of 132 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I also considered six completed staff questionnaires and 25 pupil questionnaires.

I reviewed a range of school documents, including your summary of the school's effectiveness and the school's improvement plan. I also looked at safeguarding documents and reviewed the school's website.