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Miss Lucy Garside
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Dear Miss Garside

Short inspection of Woodley Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 20 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 the school was judged to be good in March 2015.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

In a period of uncertainty about the leadership of the school, you have galvanised the staff team. You and the acting deputy headteacher know your school well and are accurate in your judgement of where Woodley Primary is on its improvement journey. Governors and leaders have started to address the decline in pupils' overall achievement since the previous inspection caused by the disruption to staffing. They recognise that improvements made so far are due to your committed, determined and collaborative leadership. Strengths were seen in pupils' good behaviour and your and the staff team's commitment to improving attainment and progress for all pupils. The use of coaching to develop leaders' skills and the clarity and consistency of the enquiry-based approach of the curriculum are also strengths of the school.

You, the leadership team, staff and governors have maintained and further developed the welcoming and warm feel to the school. There are strong relationships between staff, pupils and their families. Leaders are determined to raise aspirations for all pupils. They have reviewed strategies to teach English and mathematics and developed an approach across the school, known as the 'Woodley Way'. This lists the expectations for each year group and explains the progression of skills and knowledge, and identifies a consistent approach to teaching and learning. This approach is beginning to lead to improvements, particularly in the teaching of

reading and aspects of mathematics. There is evidence that this is also beginning to have an impact on pupils' attainment and rates of progress in these areas.

The learning environment is purposeful and calm. Pupils are polite and well mannered. They state that they enjoy lessons and they appreciate the support for their learning that teachers provide. Pupils value the variety of extra-curricular activities, including trips and various sports clubs. Those who completed the pupils' survey were very positive about the school, with almost all stating they would recommend their school to a friend.

Parents and carers feel that the school is good at both caring for their children and developing them academically. Parents say, 'Woodley is a fantastic school with amazing teachers.' Others agree, stating this school 'has a lovely energy... allowing the children to make the best of their learning opportunities'. However, one-fifth of parents who offered a view to the inspector feel their children could make better progress, with a small proportion attributing this to past staffing issues.

You and the team have largely taken effective action to address the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. You were asked to improve the quality of leadership and management of those teachers with responsibility for coordinating curriculum subjects. These leaders have benefited from high-quality training and advice to develop their leadership skills. They are now able to explain confidently what actions they have taken to improve teaching, learning and to a lesser extent assessment, in their subjects. A large number of staff completed the staff survey and are proud to work at the school, recognising the positive changes made since the last inspection.

You were also asked to ensure that pupils are given work which is appropriately challenging, especially for the most able. The school's key stage 1 results in last year's national tests showed an increase in the proportion of pupils reaching the higher standards in reading and mathematics. This proportion is now above the national averages. In key stage 2, attainment at the higher standard is broadly in line with the national average in reading and below the national average in writing and mathematics. The proportion of current pupils reaching the school's own higher standards is increasing in reading. However, there is still more to be done to challenge the most able pupils across the school in mathematics and writing.

During the inspection, we discussed the next steps which must be a priority to enable the school to improve further. Pupils' progress in writing during key stage 2 remains among the lowest nationally. While leaders have made improvements, the impact of their work has not made sufficient improvement to the quality of pupils' writing, especially in key stage 2 and that of disadvantaged pupils.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Safeguarding procedures are fit for purpose. Leaders and governors fulfil statutory requirements when appointing new members of staff and keep accurate records.

Parents and pupils feel that the school is a safe place to be. Leaders, including governors, ensure that staff receive high-quality training. As a result, staff know how to recognise the signs and symptoms of abuse. Staff are very clear about the school's procedures for reporting and recording any concerns they have regarding the safeguarding of pupils. Leaders maintain records meticulously. They are tenacious in their work to protect vulnerable pupils.

Leaders work effectively with parents and other agencies to keep pupils safe and secure. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe. Leaders have introduced and implemented clear programmes to teach pupils about personal and internet safety. Pupils understand the dangers associated with internet use and report concerns to staff. Attendance rates of all pupils and groups of pupils are currently in line with, or improving towards, the national averages. Leaders have implemented very good procedures to tackle absenteeism.

Inspection findings

- Although overall standards of writing in key stage 1 are in line with the national average, attainment and progress in pupils' writing at key stage 2 are below the national average and have been for the past three years. My first line of enquiry, therefore, was to find out what you have done to improve writing across key stage 2. You and the leadership team have given writing a strong profile in school. Pupils' writing is displayed and celebrated around the school. A range of training for teachers has resulted in the development of a whole-school consistent approach to the teaching of writing. This revised approach to the teaching of writing involves three stages: pupils look at high-quality texts, investigate grammar and punctuation techniques, and implement their learning in their own writing. It also identifies higher expectations of what pupils can achieve, but these are not monitored in sufficient depth to ensure that they are met.
- The work in current pupils' books indicates some progress has been made so far this year. Pupils are including more effective words for atmosphere and interest. They are also writing at greater length and include the features of a range of styles. However, their work shows an inconsistent understanding of sentence structure. Younger pupils write in simple sentences, which are brief and lack detail. Older pupils experiment with a wider variety of sentence structures and punctuation, but these can become overlong and rambling. Punctuation is not always accurate. The application of spelling, punctuation and grammar is weak and, as a result, the quality of pupils' writing is not good enough to show the impact of leaders' actions. Too many pupils are writing at standards below those typically expected for their age and development.
- My second line of enquiry was to find out how effectively leaders use the pupil premium funding to enable disadvantaged pupils to make good progress and attain well. Leaders have recently reviewed the school's pupil premium strategy, as they acknowledged the previous version was not focused sharply enough on addressing the barriers these pupils face in their learning. As a result, the attainment and progress of disadvantaged pupils were below national averages at the end of key stage 2, especially in reading and writing.

- Leaders have invested the pupil premium funding in high-quality, class-based support and reduced the number of one-to-one sessions outside the classroom. This shift of emphasis has already had a positive impact on the standard of reading. However, there has been insufficient time to see similar impact in writing. Standards in this subject remain low. Leaders are aware of this discrepancy and have plans to address this with greater determination by holding the newly created phase leaders accountable for the achievement of these pupils.
- For my third line of enquiry, I looked at what leaders are doing to challenge pupils to attain well at the higher standards in mathematics. Results in the national assessments in key stages 1 and 2 over the past three years have shown that the proportions of pupils gaining the higher standards, while increasing, have been below the national average. Leaders have introduced the 'Woodley Way' to the teaching of mathematics. They have also ensured that standards are monitored termly, thus holding teachers more closely to account for the progress and attainment of pupils.
- The consistent teaching approach, with raised expectations, is having a positive impact on pupils' understanding and recall of number facts. Their books show they can calculate with increasingly large numbers. They use pictures and charts to help them with their calculations. The 'Woodley Way' also includes more opportunities to explain their mathematical thinking and solve problems. However, the most able pupils' books show this is inconsistent across the school. In those classes where reasoning and problem solving are included regularly, these pupils' explanations are more accurate and detailed, and include appropriate mathematical vocabulary. This shows that these pupils are gaining a deeper understanding of mathematics. However, the quantity and quality of reasoning and problem solving is inconsistent across the school, especially for the most able pupils.
- Finally, I considered how well leaders have implemented and monitored the curriculum, in subjects other than English and mathematics. Leaders have a clear understanding of the purpose and intent of their curriculum. They have ensured that subject-specific skills are encouraged and developed through an enquiry-led approach to planning. Inspection evidence shows that this approach is consistently applied across subjects. There is clear progression in both teaching and learning. The quality of pupils' work is improving and they also enjoy the challenge of finding out answers to the questions posed as part of the enquiry.
- Leaders have used training and the advice from consultants to enhance teaching and their own leadership skills. Their monitoring is clear and further improvements are discussed in staff meetings. Effective use is made of external quality marks to benchmark the school's curriculum against the highest standards. Leaders have made good progress in addressing this area for improvement from the last inspection.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- attainment and progress in writing at key stage 2 and for disadvantaged pupils are improved by:
 - enabling them to more consistently and accurately apply their knowledge of spelling, punctuation and grammar
 - ensuring that a tighter focus is given to the implementation and monitoring of the school's agreed improvement strategies
- greater proportions of the most able pupils are challenged to achieve the higher standards in mathematics.

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

Yours sincerely

Ian Shackleton
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection I met with you, the staff and members of the governing body. I also met with pupils to seek their views about the school. I spoke with a representative from the local authority. I also spoke with pupils informally in the classroom and around school. We observed teaching and learning together in various classes, and I scrutinised the writing of pupils in key stage 2 and the writing and mathematics of the most able pupils.

I examined and discussed a range of documents, including those relating to attendance and safeguarding. I looked at the school's self-evaluation, improvement priorities and its assessment information.

I considered the views expressed by parents gathered in the playground before the start of the school day and 19 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. I also considered the 30 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and the 63 responses to the pupils' questionnaire.