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Mrs Jayne Perry
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Perry

Short inspection of New Waltham Academy

Following my visit to the school on 9 January 2019, 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.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in specific areas. This may indicate that the school has improved significantly overall. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

The senior leadership team is extremely strong. Your self-evaluation is very thorough, and you have worked with other leaders in school to address the priorities that you have identified with a sense of urgency. You are all determined to provide all your pupils with the right care, support and challenge to develop into confident, resilient, life-long learners.

Leaders have taken appropriate actions to address the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Pupils are routinely provided with tasks that are pitched at the right level at the beginning of lessons. They are then quickly moved on to new activities which provide them with greater levels of challenge as soon as they are able.

Changes to the way handwriting is taught across the school have had an extremely positive impact on presentation. Teachers have high expectations of what their pupils can achieve, and pupils are expected to present their work to the best of their ability in all subjects.

English and mathematics leaders regularly monitor teaching, learning and assessment across the school. You have created three staff teams to monitor other subjects. These leaders and teams use their findings skilfully to identify strengths and areas for development. They give teachers effective support and challenge to help them to make improvements in their teaching.

Staff say that they are very proud to work at this school and feel that they are exceptionally well supported. They say that leaders have created a climate in which teachers are trusted to take risks and innovate in ways that are right for the pupils. Staff really value the opportunities they have for professional development both within and outside school.

Governors know the school extremely well. They use published data, reports from school leaders and visits to school astutely to inform their decisions and to help them to provide leaders with effective support and challenge. For example, they supported leaders to take on the running of the school's breakfast, after-school and holiday club. They challenged leaders about the introduction of project-based learning to ensure that it had a positive impact on pupils.

Pupils say that they really enjoy school. They spoke with enthusiasm about the different projects that they have completed and about the challenging work they are given, especially in English and mathematics. Pupils are very well behaved in lessons, around school and on the playground. They could talk at length about how different values, such as tolerance and respect, are developed in school.

Parents and carers praise the school for the excellent work it does to develop the 'whole child'. They say that they receive lots of valuable information from school, especially about how to support their child's learning. They look forward to being invited to project celebrations at the end of each term.

Progress is typically very strong in all key stages. The proportion achieving a good level of development at the end of Reception has been above the national average for three years. In Year 2, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics was above the national average in 2018. In Year 6, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics has been above the national average for three years. The proportion reaching the higher standard in Year 6 has been above the national average in writing and mathematics for two years.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors ensure that safeguarding policies and procedures are fit for purpose. All staff are well trained and show a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities to keep pupils safe. Safeguarding updates are regularly given at staff meetings. Record-keeping is very thorough and shows that, when necessary, actions are taken in a timely manner. The school has built very positive relationships with vulnerable families. Staff ensure that these families receive very effective support, either from school or from outside agencies.

Governors are given safeguarding training as soon as possible after their

appointment. The safeguarding governor is involved in completing and checking the school's annual safeguarding audit.

Parents say that they are confident that their children are safe in school and when they are taken out of school on educational visits. There are very few concerns about poor behaviour or bullying and the vast majority of parents say that the school responds well to any concerns that they raise.

Pupils say that they always feel safe in school. Pupils can demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of how to keep themselves, and in some cases others, safe. They were able to tell me about the work they have done on keeping safe when using mobile phones and the internet, first aid and road safety.

Inspection findings

- Phonics lessons are well structured. Pupils enjoy the routines that have been established and respond well to the challenging tasks that they are given. The school is proactive in providing additional support for children in Reception and pupils in Year 1 who are not on track to meet the required standard in phonics at the end of Year 1. Additional support is also provided for the small number of pupils that do not meet the required standard by the end of Year 2. This support has been effective in increasing the proportion of pupils who reached the required standard in phonics and in ensuring that pupils have the skills needed to access the key stage 2 curriculum. However, there is still work to do to accelerate the progress of the most able children in the early years in phonics, especially in Nursery.
- Pupils have a wealth of opportunities to develop knowledge, skills and understanding in a wide range of subjects through project-based learning. Pupils are introduced to a new project at the beginning of each term with a first-hand experience, either in school or by making an educational visit. Each project ends with an authentic outcome which invites a wider audience to celebrate or become involved in the learning. For example, pupils in Year 3 and 4 are working to produce documentaries about dinosaurs which will be shown to parents at the local cinema at the end of term.
- Pupils have many opportunities to apply and practise English and mathematics skills through their project work. However, this is not allowed to detract from learning in other subjects. Staff work in teams to check the work that is done through each project. They make sure that pupils have opportunities to develop age-appropriate knowledge and skills in subjects beyond English and mathematics. Nevertheless, further work is needed to ensure that key concepts are revisited, and that pupils' knowledge is continually extended in each subject.
- In 2017/18, absence was above the national average. However, the school has a wide range of strategies in place to reduce absence. Leaders make sure that absence is thoroughly and carefully followed up through phone calls, letters, meetings and sometimes prosecution. Postcards are sent home to reward good and improved attendance. These strategies have resulted in a reduction in both absence and persistent absence over the last term.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils' skills and knowledge in subjects beyond English and mathematics are further extended
- the level of challenge in early phonics is further increased, especially for the most able children in early years.

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

Yours sincerely

Chris Cook
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I made visits to all classes with the two deputy headteachers. I looked at work with the English and mathematics leaders. I met with five governors, including the chair and vice-chair of the governing body.

I talked to several parents as they dropped their children off at the start of the school day and took account of the 85 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. I talked informally with pupils in lessons, met formally with a group of pupils from Years 1 to 6 and took account of the 72 responses to the Ofsted pupil survey. I also listened to pupils read from Years 1, 2 and 3. I met with a group of staff and took account of the 20 responses to the Ofsted staff survey.

I scrutinised a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation document and improvement plan, minutes of governing body meetings, records of the checks on teaching and learning and attendance and safeguarding information.