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Caroline Ginty  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Ginty

### **Short inspection of Woodside Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 8 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 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.

Since your appointment in September 2017, you have set high expectations. You are an effective leader, demonstrating a relentless drive to improve the school further. Together with the deputy headteacher, you have created an effective team. Teaching staff value the professional development opportunities provided by leaders, helping them to become better at their work. Staff are proud of this school and enjoy working here. Morale is high.

Pupils enjoy all that the school has to offer. They say that their teachers 'make lessons fun'. Pupils told me how they learned from their mistakes and that their teachers will 'help them until they understand'. They value the support and challenge adults provide them and know they are expected to do their best. Pupils speak enthusiastically about the different subjects and topics they have studied. They are confident, polite and well-mannered. Parents agree that pupils are doing well at school. One typical response that was made on Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, said, 'Teaching and pupil expectations are both of a high standard. My children are thriving in the school and enjoy every aspect of school life.'

The vast majority of parents and carers are positive about the school. They value the leadership and direction you have provided since your appointment. This has contributed to the improvements made at the school. Parents consider that their child is well taught

and would recommend the school to other parents. One comment on Parent View that simply summed up the view of others, stated, 'This is a great school with great teachers.'

Governors are developing their skills to ensure that they hold school leaders to account effectively. They make use of training to improve their understanding so that they ask searching questions. Governors value the information they receive from leaders and use it to plan how they hold leaders to account. This means that they have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.

At the previous inspection, leaders were asked to raise pupils' achievement in mathematics. Leaders have made effective use of external support. Teachers have been given training that has improved their confidence in teaching mathematics. Pupils are encouraged to explain their thinking using mathematical language. Using the school's chosen approach, pupils are asked to 'prove it' by representing their answers in different ways. Pupils' workbooks show that they are making good progress by developing their reasoning skills through regular problem-solving activities.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders and governors place a high priority on the importance of safeguarding. Three leaders are trained to lead on safeguarding. Through regular discussion and updates, there is a vigilant culture for keeping pupils safe. Where concerns are raised, issues are investigated and swiftly acted on. Staff have received high-quality training through the school's training programme, and they understand how to recognise signs of abuse and use the reporting systems effectively.

The checks carried out on people who work with children are thorough and managed efficiently by the school. A safeguarding governor makes regular visits to check that records are well maintained and that policies and processes are understood by all staff.

Pupils feel safe in school. They enjoy positive relationships with adults and are confident that, if they shared their concerns, these would be acted on and resolved. Worry boxes are placed around the school so that pupils can share their concerns confidentially. Pupils say they are taught how to use the internet safely and understand not to disclose any personal information when they are online. Through assemblies and the school's personal, social and health education programme, pupils are taught to respect one another and to be kind.

### **Inspection findings**

- During this inspection, I wanted to check the actions being taken by leaders to improve attendance rates. These have been below the national average for the past three years. Since your arrival you have carried out a thorough analysis and introduced regular monitoring of pupils' attendance. Thresholds for identifying concerns with attendance have been raised. If a pupil's attendance falls below this threshold, parents are contacted and invited to meet with school leaders so that issues may be addressed. Attendance information is provided in weekly newsletters, ensuring that parents

understand about the importance of children not missing any school. Your current evaluation shows that attendance is improving. However, attendance is not yet good enough for all groups, especially disadvantaged pupils.

- Although the good level of development at the end of the early years has continued to improve, it remained below average in 2018. I wanted to find out whether children made good progress from their starting points across the early years provision.
- Both the Nursery and Reception classes are well-organised. Clear routines and systems ensure that children settle quickly and play together well. Children make good progress in their social and emotional development. Teachers plan good activities to support children's mathematical development. Children are encouraged to identify patterns, recognise shapes and apply their understanding through their play. For example, one child carried out a travel survey and was able to count accurately the number of journeys made by a particular mode of transport. From their low starting points, children's mathematical development is good.
- Leaders make good use of a linked theme to develop children's language skills. Key vocabulary is placed in each activity so that children are encouraged to use these words during their play. Opportunities to develop early writing skills are provided through mark making activities. However, not all children, especially the boys, are willing to write regularly and practise letter formation. This means that achievement in writing is lower than in other areas of development.
- Next, I looked at how the most able pupils are being supported to make better progress. This is because in 2018, progress between key stage 1 and 2 for high-attaining pupils was below similar pupils in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Leaders are giving greater priority to ensuring that there is challenge for the most able pupils. You are creating a culture of 'learning without limits' so that teachers now have higher expectations of pupils, including the most able. The most able pupils told me that they feel their work is more difficult because they can select their level of challenge. Leaders check teaching to ensure that activities encourage the most able pupils to think harder about their learning. Pupils' books show that they are making stronger progress, especially in English and mathematics. In some other subjects, such as science, the most able pupils complete similar work to other pupils and are not appropriately challenged to work at a greater depth.
- Finally, I checked how leaders are improving pupils' writing. This was identified as an area for improvement at the previous inspection. Leaders have embedded a consistent approach to the teaching of writing. Teachers now select high-quality texts for class reading, which is linked to closely developing pupils' writing skills. Pupils study the texts to provide them with a rich source of vocabulary and understanding of authorship.
- Pupils' books show a well-planned sequence of learning that introduces, explores and applies key features in different genres of writing. Editing skills are used effectively to improve the quality of the final piece of work. Pupils write well across other areas of the curriculum, such as history and geography, to apply and practise their skills. Consequently, pupils are making good progress in their writing.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to work with parents so that attendance is at least average, especially for disadvantaged pupils
- in the early years provision, teachers plan regular opportunities for children, especially the boys, to practise and improve their early writing skills
- teachers challenge the most able pupils across subjects other than English and 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 Hertfordshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Steve Mellors  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I visited different classrooms with you to observe teaching and learning and to scrutinise pupils' work in their books. I held meetings with you, the deputy headteacher as the leader of English and the early years leader. I also spoke to two governors and your chosen school improvement partner. I met with a group of most-able pupils and an additional group of pupils from key stage 2. I evaluated documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, the school development plan, information about pupils' progress, minutes of governing body meetings, attendance records and information about safeguarding. I considered 23 responses, including 13 free-text responses, to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I also looked at the 13 responses to the staff questionnaire and 42 responses to the pupil survey.