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Mrs Jacqueline Boyle
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Dear Mrs Boyle

Short inspection of Westoning Lower School

Following my visit to the school on 20 February 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 July 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 the governing body have an accurate view of the strengths of the school and the areas you still want to improve. You have continued to raise the standard of teaching and learning and so attainment in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 1 has been consistently above the national average for three years.

Pupils enjoy coming to a school where they are known and treated as individuals. This means that all groups of pupils make good progress from their starting points. Classroom visits show the school to be a happy and industrious place. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very positive. Pupils behave well both in class and around the school because they understand the high expectations adults have of them and want to do their best. The school environment is orderly and stimulating and celebrates pupils' work and achievements in colourful displays.

The previous inspection report identified the need for leaders and governors to improve the way it communicates with and responds to parents' concerns. Free-text comments left on Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and conversations with parents at the school gate acknowledge the progress the school has made in this area. The overwhelming majority of free-text comments were positive and highlighted the care and individual attention that parents feel their children receive at school. Where you have worked closely with parents to support their children, for example in reducing persistent absence, you have been successful at forging

positive relationships. However, a minority of parents still feel that the sharing of information between home and school could be more effective.

The school is very much part of the local community. Since the previous inspection you and the governing body have taken on the management of the village's pre-school provision which caters for children from the age of two years. At the heart of this move was the intention that pre-school children benefit from the expertise of the early years team. The impact of this is already evident in the clearer focus on promoting early learning and the attention paid to how well each child is developing in each area of learning. On the day of my visit, children were enjoying a variety of activities in the outdoor area. Some adults were adept at identifying where they could promote learning through play, for example by joining in a ball game to demonstrate how to catch. However, others are still too focused on simple supervision and do not yet demonstrate the skills to identify and capitalise on learning opportunities.

Safeguarding is effective.

Staff are well informed about new safeguarding guidance through regular training and updates. Safeguarding is a standing item at staff meetings and all adults are confident in raising any concerns they may have about individual pupils. Leaders follow up concerns raised diligently, seeking support from outside agencies when necessary. Parents feel that their children are safe and well looked after. The school helps to raise awareness in pupils of how to keep themselves safe through lessons and assemblies on topics such as e-safety, anti-bullying and playing safely during school holidays.

Governors actively fulfil their legal duties to ensure that pupils are safe in school. They have improved arrangements to keep pupils safe on the school site, expect to receive regular safeguarding updates and make sure that appropriate pre-employment checks are carried out on new staff.

Inspection findings

- One area for improvement identified in the previous inspection report was to ensure that the most able pupils in school are sufficiently challenged. You have raised everyone's expectations of what the most able pupils can achieve. Teachers provide learning activities more frequently where these pupils can demonstrate their skills and excel in reading, writing and mathematics. For example, English books show that pupils are given opportunities to write in a variety of styles and develop their writing skills well over time. Mathematics books clearly show that the most able pupils are routinely given harder work to do.
- The proportion of Year 2 pupils who reach greater depth in reading, writing and in mathematics has been consistently above the national average over a three-year period. This percentage has risen steadily in writing and mathematics and remained stable in reading. Teachers have also introduced challenges for pupils to take on if they complete their work and pupils are keen to do this. However, in

subjects such as science, geography and history, pupils' books do not evidence the same level of challenge. Pupils of all abilities are given the same tasks to complete and so the most able pupils are not able to reach the higher standards of attainment they are capable of in these subjects.

- Pupils leave Westoning Lower School halfway through key stage 2 and you recognise that it is important to make sure that they are well prepared to successfully complete this stage of their education at their next school. An important factor in the way you prepare pupils to move on is to instil good learning habits. Staff have recently introduced a new approach designed to increase pupils' resilience by encouraging them to take risks, learn from their mistakes and not to give up if they find something difficult. It is apparent in visits to classrooms that pupils have a positive attitude to learning. They are now developing the determination to overcome obstacles and tackle more-difficult work that will support their progress as they move onto the next stage of their education.
- The curriculum provides a rich and varied diet of topics and enrichment activities that certainly capture the interest of your pupils well. For example, pupils had recently worked with a visiting author and each year group has the opportunity to participate in a day-long workshop run by history specialists to help bring alive the period they are studying. Topics such as the Egyptians and the Great Fire of London also provide opportunities for imaginative art and technology projects. Even so, pupils' subject knowledge and specific skills in science, history and geography, for example, are not as well developed as they are in other subjects.
- Work in pupils' science and topic books does not demonstrate the same rigour and high expectations that are seen in their English and mathematics books. Too often, pupils of all abilities are given the same tasks to complete and these tasks can lack challenge, especially for the most able pupils. There is also little evidence in pupils' books that activities enable them to develop the subject-specific skills that they will need beyond key stage 2, such as scientific enquiry or how to evaluate different sources of information.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers plan lessons in subjects such as science, history and geography that develop subject-specific skills and provide appropriate challenge for all groups of pupils, especially the most able
- recent improvements in the pre-school provision continue so that all adults maximise opportunities to support children in reaching the early learning goals
- the work to engage positively with parents remains a high priority.

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

Yours sincerely

Lesley Daniel
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, your deputy headteacher, who is also the safeguarding lead, and your early years leader. I spoke with other staff including the Year 4 team, three members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority. I visited classes with you, where I observed pupils' learning and talked to them about their work and their school. In lessons, we looked at pupils' work in books to determine the quality of learning over time and the quality of learning across the curriculum.

I spent time speaking informally with pupils in class and observed them during lunchtime. I considered the 42 responses to Parent View, which included free-text comments, and the views of parents who I spoke with at the beginning of the school day. I also took into account the 18 completed staff questionnaires. I scrutinised the school's documents about safeguarding, including the record of checks on the suitability of each member of staff to work with pupils, the school's own evaluation of its performance and leaders' plans for its improvement.