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Mrs Sheena Bell
Acting Headteacher
Woodlesford Primary School
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Dear Mrs Bell

Short inspection of Woodlesford Primary School.

Following my visit to the school on 27 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 May 2014.

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.**

Woodlesford Primary is a happy school. Pupils show kindness towards each other and respect for their teachers. Pupils report there is 'not really any bullying in school' and their responses to the online pupil questionnaire support this.

The school staff and community have experienced difficult times of late, culminating in the dismissal of the headteacher in July 2018. You have fulfilled the role of acting headteacher since June 2018 but will leave the school in July 2019. The turbulence in senior leadership has limited leaders' work to set a clear strategic direction and secure improvements to the quality of education. Governors have, to date, been unsuccessful in their endeavours to appoint a substantive headteacher.

Despite recent challenges, the morale of staff is high and parental support for the school's work is keeping staff and governors buoyant. Parents responding to the online inspection questionnaire, Parent View, indicated high levels of satisfaction with the school and 92% of the 143 respondents would recommend the school to other parents. Governors have been careful to keep parents informed about developments in the school and to take their opinions into account during the selection process for a new headteacher.

At the last inspection, leaders were asked to improve the quality of teaching by raising expectations, particularly for the most able pupils. Leaders were also asked to improve the quality of feedback to pupils and to promote good spelling and legible handwriting. You and your staff have successfully addressed the issue of feedback and have adopted a common approach that is consistently used by teachers. In the main, pupils are responding well to increased expectations of their presentation and handwriting.

In 2018, pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics was above the national average at the end of both key stage 1 and 2. At the end of key stage 2, pupils made strong progress in mathematics but broadly average progress in reading and writing. High-attaining pupils did not achieve as well as they should have in writing. This is a priority for improvement. Inspection evidence also confirms that there is some variability in the quality of phonics teaching, particularly in key stage 1, which needs to be addressed.

There is work to do to strengthen the leadership of the school. In addition to the lack of a permanent arrangement for the headship of the school, the quality of middle leadership is inconsistent, particularly in relation to reading and writing.

Safeguarding is effective

Governors take their responsibilities for safeguarding very seriously. They commissioned an audit of safeguarding which was conducted by the local authority in Spring 2018. This confirmed that safeguarding arrangements were fit for purpose. Following the dismissal of the headteacher, governors worked closely with the local authority and the police and were reassured that there were no aspects of the investigation which raised concerns about the school's work. Governors and senior leaders are not complacent and have continually acted to refine and strengthen safeguarding. They have introduced new firewalls and stepped up teaching to help to keep pupils safe while using the internet. Leaders have ensured that risk assessments for all aspects of the school's work are exact to minimise any dangers to pupils.

You have ensured that all staff have up-to-date training in basic child protection. Governors and staff have attended training to ensure that safe recruitment processes are tightly implemented and senior leaders and the school administrator have strengthened recruitment record-keeping. Leaders ensure that staff receive regular updates, keeping the safety of pupils at the forefront of everyone's mind.

Inspection findings

- During this one-day inspection, I wanted to find out how well phonics is taught and how effectively you have supported teachers to improve high prior-attaining pupils' progress in writing. I wanted to understand how well teachers meet the needs of disadvantaged pupils and to explore whether pupils were achieving well in the full range of curriculum subjects.
- Children join the Reception class well prepared for the demands of school. Over

two thirds enter with skills and abilities at or above those typically seen. Effective phonics teaching in Reception is enabling children to make strong progress, developing the fine motor and language skills needed to get them off to a good start in key stage 1.

- In 2018, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the end of Year 1 phonics screening check declined considerably and was below average. This was partly due to the specific needs of pupils within the cohort, but inconsistencies in the way phonics has been taught have also contributed to this decline in outcomes. Leaders have not ensured that teachers use a common approach and there is no agreement about the resources that should be used to ensure strong progress in learning phonics. In some classes, learning support assistants are not being used to best effect and teaching is not sufficiently well matched to pupils' abilities.
- Some leaders are effectively developing and leading their subject. This is especially the case in mathematics, where in 2018 pupils' progress by the end of key stage 2 was in the top 20% of schools nationally. However, the leadership of English is underdeveloped because middle leaders have not been given sufficient guidance on how they might carry out their roles to improve reading and writing across the school. Leaders have recently turned their attention to monitoring pupils' books, where they can see evidence of improved feedback from teachers and improvements in spelling. This said, leaders have been less successful in supporting teachers to improve the quality of pupils' writing. Similarly, the books of high-attaining pupils demonstrate that these pupils are not consistently achieving as well as they should in writing.
- Senior leaders have ensured that funding for disadvantaged pupils is appropriately spent, so that disadvantaged pupils make progress in line with other pupils.
- The school has a higher proportion of pupils who are looked after than usually seen. Careful nurturing of these pupils is helping them to settle quickly into school and to make progress. However, leaders have not ensured that targets included in the personal education plans of pupils who are looked after are sufficiently precise to ensure that they make the strong progress needed.
- Staff are united in their aspiration to deliver a rich curriculum and expansive experiences for pupils. Pupils' achievements in music and art are impressive due to keen and knowledgeable subject leaders supporting staff to include the arts in their planning. Pupils' books show that staff have given much thought to how to weave pupils' learning, in science or geography, for example into English lessons. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about the wide range of extra-curricular and sporting activities available to them. Many staff are generous with their time, running football, netball, yoga, Lego, drama, art and music clubs. The cross-country club is particularly popular, with over 80 pupils attending each week. Pupils really value the opportunity to experience adventurous outdoor activities on residential visits in Years 4, 5 and 6.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they swiftly secure arrangements for the senior leadership of the school so that staff, pupils and parents have confidence going forward
- senior leaders develop the skills of middle leaders, particularly in English, so they can more rigorously monitor the quality of teaching and learning and more effectively contribute to securing improvements in the quality of teaching
- they improve staff subject knowledge to enable a consistent approach to the teaching of phonics, particularly in key stage 1
- teachers continue to provide appropriate challenge and inspire the most able pupils to excel in writing
- senior leaders sharpen targets within the personal education plans of pupils who are looked after to enable these pupils to make better progress.

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

Yours sincerely

Lesley Butcher
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

We met throughout the day to discuss different aspects of the school's work and visited lessons together. I met with five representatives of the governing body and a representative of the local authority. I scrutinised documents relating to safeguarding procedures and looked at assessment information. I considered the views of 30 responses of staff to the online questionnaire and considered 143 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire to parents. I talked to pupils about their learning in lessons and at lunchtime and looked at 107 responses from pupils to the online questionnaire.