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Mrs Lisa Speedy  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Speedy

### **Short inspection of Whoberley Hall Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 12 March 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 2014.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

The headteacher and governing body have steered the school through an unsettled time in recent years with calmness, clarity and an ambition for pupils to succeed. They have ensured that staff feel valued and are motivated to work hard. As a result, pupils continue to learn well.

The relatively new leadership team works effectively as a cohesive unit. The assistant headteachers and phase leaders support the headteacher well. This provides considerable strength and depth in leadership capacity. As a result, leaders are well placed to overcome obstacles in the journey of further improvement. For example, in addition to their own roles, the headteacher and phase leaders are, at present, covering the responsibilities normally carried out by the two assistant headteachers due to periods of absence. While this adds to their workload, the remaining leaders have ensured that the school continues to function effectively.

Leaders have an honest view of what is working well and what needs to improve. Where something is not as good as it should be, leaders consider carefully what action is required. They ensure that staff feel well supported in making any necessary changes and that they are suitably trained to do so. In this way, leaders implement new initiatives successfully. For example, teachers received specialist training to help them embed the recently introduced approaches to teaching writing and mathematics. These strategies have worked well. Pupils' outcomes in these

subjects have improved after a dip in recent years. They now make secure progress and gain good knowledge and skills.

Leaders have tackled the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection with the same high degree of thought and care. As a result, the quality of teaching has improved further. Pupils make better progress in writing and mathematics now because teachers set work that is appropriately challenging and move them on to harder work when they are ready.

Leaders, rightly, identified the need to improve the teaching of reading. In recent years, pupils have not made as much progress in reading as they should. They have not learned to read as accurately as they must to help them make sense of harder texts. Leaders have begun to tackle the weaknesses that caused this issue. Early successes are evident. For example, many pupils now read more frequently than in the past. Pupils across the school are learning to analyse and understand more complex texts. However, there is still work to do. Some pupils need to be more convinced about the benefits and pleasures of reading. Some still struggle to read confidently because weaknesses in their knowledge remain.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Leaders care deeply about pupils' welfare. They make sure that the school's policies and procedures for safeguarding actively promote the safety and well-being of each pupil. For example, leaders ensure that staff are well trained in how to identify causes for concern and to act appropriately when the need arises.

Staff are vigilant. Because they know their pupils so well, they are well attuned to spotting a potential problem. They take all concerns very seriously and pass on any worries to the headteacher, who is the designated leader for safeguarding. The headteacher monitors pupils who may be at risk and is quick to act if there are signs that a pupil may need protection. She works closely with relevant agencies who can provide support so that pupils, and their families, get the help they need.

### **Inspection findings**

- Staff work very hard to make the school a happy, worthwhile place to be. They do whatever their pupils need to feel safe, settled and ready to learn. Many of the parents and carers who commented on the online survey said how much they appreciate the lengths staff go to to look after their children and help them succeed.
- Leaders look out for signs that a pupil might be unhappy in school and do their best to help. For example, leaders keep a close eye on pupils' attendance. If a pupil is absent too often, leaders work with parents to try to find a solution to whatever is the cause of the low attendance. In many cases, this makes a big difference. Pupils' attendance improves. However, leaders' efforts to increase attendance rates remain frustrated. This occurs when parents keep their children off school at the beginning or end of terms in order to extend their holidays.

- In recent years, the instances of pupils being temporarily excluded from school have been high. Leaders only exclude a pupil as a last resort. They do all they can to support the pupil so as to prevent the need for exclusion. When a pupil returns to school after a period of being excluded, they have a fresh start. Staff help them to reintegrate quickly and support them to learn from the mistakes of the past. As a result, the number of exclusions is dropping.
- Leaders have worked hard to improve pupils' achievement in reading. They have made sure that pupils read often in school and are actively encouraging more reading at home. Many pupils are rising to the challenge. They say that they like reading and that they choose to read for pleasure.
- Not all pupils share the view that reading is worthwhile. Some say that reading is a chore. They only read when they have to do it, not because they choose to. These are largely the pupils in key stage 2 who still struggle to read fluently. Reading is hard work for them because it takes a lot of effort to decode the words. This leaves little thinking space for them to understand the text. Reading is not an enjoyable experience for them. This has a direct impact on the progress they make. They do not choose to read because they find it hard. Therefore, they do not read often enough to practise and get better.
- Leaders have given helpful guidance to support teachers in teaching what pupils need to know to really understand what they are reading. For example, teachers focus much effort on helping pupils to develop a broad, rich vocabulary. As a result, many pupils now make better progress and are learning to make sense of complex texts. Nevertheless, some still struggle because they lack the skills to decode words quickly and accurately.
- Most pupils do successfully acquire knowledge of letters and the sounds they make. However, for some, this process takes longer than it should. Some do not learn all the sounds they need. This is because the phonics programme in the early years and key stage 1 is not as effective as it could be. This is, in part, because teachers do not ensure that pupils move on to learn new sounds as soon as they are ready. Sometimes the reverse is true. On occasions, teachers move a pupil into a higher group to learn the next set of sounds when they have not fully mastered earlier ones. This leads to weak foundations for the new knowledge and paves the way for the pupil to find reading difficult later on.
- The school provides well for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders take care to accurately identify what the pupil needs to help them succeed socially, emotionally and academically. Teachers and teaching assistants are skilled in providing the extra help and support pupils with SEND need in lessons and in additional sessions. As a result, the work in pupils' books shows that they make good progress from their starting points.

## **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they fully understand and address the reasons why some pupils in key stage 2 do not enjoy reading, including why they cannot read fluently and with understanding
- they implement the phonics programme systematically and rigorously so that pupils learn the phonics code securely and as quickly as possible.

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

Yours sincerely

Sandy Hayes  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with the headteacher and leadership team, other school staff, a group of governors, including the chair, and a representative of the local authority. I spoke informally to pupils in lessons. I looked at the 54 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. There were no responses to the staff or pupil questionnaires. I visited lessons with leaders and looked at the work in a selection of pupils' books. I heard some pupils read and talked to them about their learning. I considered the school's self-evaluation and its plans for development. I took into account pupils' standards of attainment and rates of progress. I read a range of documents, including those related to safeguarding and child protection.