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Mrs Rachael Russell
Headteacher
Yew Tree Primary School
Wherretts Well Lane
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Dear Mrs Russell

Short inspection of Yew Tree Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 19 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 January 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Together with all staff and governors, you have created a warm, welcoming and particularly inclusive learning environment. Leaders and managers pride themselves on the support offered to pupils and their philosophy of trying never to turn families away. The school is recognised for its inclusivity. The establishment of The Cedars support unit, for more vulnerable pupils who can experience difficulties coping in the mainstream, is an initiative you are justifiably proud of.

Pupils' behaviour in the school is impeccable. They are very proud of their school. Older pupils look after younger pupils through a 'pupil leaders' system. Pupils are polite and well mannered and say that everyone gets along together. As a result, they say that there is no bullying, and if it were to occur they are confident adults would deal with it swiftly and effectively.

Leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths. Plans for further development are based firmly on their thorough understanding of what needs to be done to improve the school further. You are supported by a skilled and ambitious governing body whose members hold leaders rigorously to account for their actions.

The foundation stage provision, which caters for both Nursery and Reception-aged children, is a strength of the school. Children in the Reception class enter the school with improving skills and abilities, which are now broadly in line with those found typically for pupils of their age. They make strong progress. The most recent

information shows that in 2018 all children in early years attained a good level of development, which is well above the national average.

The overwhelming majority of parents and carers are extremely supportive of the school's work and hold you and your staff in high regard. They particularly value the supportive, family atmosphere in the school. A comment from one parent typifies the views of others, 'This is a great school and all of the teachers are prepared to go the extra mile for the pupils.'

You have responded well to the areas identified for improvement at the last inspection and as a result the quality of teaching of the most able pupils has improved. These pupils particularly are set challenging activities, which means that most pupils are now working at the standard expected for their age. Pupils' achievement in mathematics is closer to matching that in reading and writing because staff ensure that pupils always understand what they are learning and the tasks they are set. This contributes to the strong progress that many pupils make.

Governors have a very clear vision for the further development of the school. They passionately believe that the school is an integral part of the local community. Governors carry out regular visits to the school to gain direct insight into pupils' perceptions and development. Governors also manage the school finances well.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and understood by staff. Detailed checks are completed meticulously on all those who work at the school to ensure that they are fit to do so. Staff and governors ensure that there is a strong culture of vigilance across the school. Staff undertake regular training to make sure that they are up to date with the most recent legislation. The designated safeguarding governor regularly completes checks to confirm that agreed procedures are adhered to fully.

You, as the school's designated safeguarding lead, have a very good understanding of safeguarding and an exceptionally strong commitment to supporting pupils and keeping them safe. This is exemplified by the recent replacement of perimeter fencing, including newly installed electronic gates, to ensure that the school site remains even more secure throughout the day.

You and your staff know the pupils and their families very well and this is a real strength of the school. Relationships are positive and help pupils to feel safe. All staff, parents and pupils who completed Ofsted's online surveys during the inspection agree that the school keeps pupils safe.

Inspection findings

- At the beginning of the inspection we agreed to focus on the following aspects: the effectiveness of teaching in both phases; the quality of teaching in science;

and reasons why absence and persistent absence in 2017/18 were higher than the national averages.

- Pupils' progress for the past three years in reading, writing and mathematics has fluctuated, from significantly above the national average in reading and mathematics in 2017 to broadly in line with the national average in 2016 and 2018. The school's assessment information indicates that the vast majority of pupils are making good and sometimes strong progress from their starting points. This was evident during our visits to all classrooms, talking to pupils and looking at their books. However, some pupils, including those who did not join the school at the start of an academic year or key stage, are not always sufficiently challenged to ensure they achieve their maximum potential.
- Teaching staff, particularly in lower school, have begun to employ a wide range of strategies aimed at boosting pupils' enthusiasm for science. In a Year 1 lesson, for example, pupils were seen cooperating with each other in groups and confidently investigating differing weatherproof qualities of various materials. In another lesson, Year 3 pupils were challenged by the teacher's probing questioning to think more deeply about what the characteristics are for identifying carnivore, herbivore and omnivore animals. This effective practice is not yet evident in the teaching of science across all phases in school.
- Attendance rates are increasing positively over time. You work closely with other staff to analyse, in detail, attendance rates for different groups. The deputy headteacher is ensuring there is a robust process of follow-up to both challenge and support parents to successfully improve their children's attendance, including those pupils who have had previously high persistent absence.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they use what they know about pupils' progress to direct their future actions more precisely so that their impact is maximised, particularly for those who do not join the school at the start of an academic year or key stage
- they continue to improve the quality of teaching and learning in science so that it is consistently strong across the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Steven Cartlidge
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I spoke with you and other leaders. Together, we visited classes to observe pupils' learning and scrutinised their work. I talked to pupils in lessons and in a meeting, when I heard their views about the school and listened to some of them read. A wide range of documentary evidence was scrutinised, including information about pupils' performance, the school's self-evaluation, the school development plan and safeguarding documentation. I met with three members of the governing body and spoke by telephone to the local authority senior education improvement adviser. I considered the monitoring records for teaching, learning and assessment, and governing body documents. I took account of the 83 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, including the 79 free-text comments. I also considered the 35 responses to the staff questionnaire and the 69 responses from pupils.