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Mrs Annie Knoupe
Headteacher
Whitstable Junior School
Oxford Street
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Dear Mrs Knoupe

Short inspection of Whitstable Junior School

Following my visit to the school on 18 June 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 April 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 have ensured that the school continues to improve since your appointment as headteacher. You have led the school through various staff changes. You have reorganised the senior leadership team and strengthened the capacity for further improvement. You, your team and the governors share a clear vision and are ambitious for all the pupils to do well and have a rich range of experiences. The pupils and their well-being are at the heart of everything you do.

Staff morale is high. You have secured the confidence of the staff in your leadership. They are proud to work at the school and feel well supported, valued and respected. Staff work well together as a strongly supportive team. One member of staff wrote, 'The culture and focus are on helping and supporting each other.' You and your staff have fostered a strong and inclusive ethos. One parent wrote: 'We hugely value the school's focus on equality, inclusion and the celebration of each child and their personal potential and achievements.'

This is a happy, calm and orderly school. Pupils are polite and friendly and behave well. They enjoy coming to school. Strong and trusting relationships between staff and pupils mean that pupils want to do well and have positive attitudes to learning. Pupils show resilience as learners, know that their efforts are valued and are proud of their achievements. Your focus on outdoor learning is having a very positive impact. Year 6 pupils were inspired to make excellent progress in writing haiku

poems while around the pond. They said that they love learning outside because 'It's peaceful, calm and we can concentrate and get good ideas.'

In response to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, parents and carers show that they are very supportive and positive about the school and your leadership. These positive views were echoed by parents I spoke to in the playground. Typically, parents commented on the good support and care their children receive, the creative lessons and the wide range of extra-curricular opportunities. Parents also appreciate the fact that you, senior leaders and teachers have a visible and accessible presence in the school. One parent wrote:

'The teachers are accessible to both pupils and parents, the after-school clubs are amazing and it is such a happy learning environment. The head and leadership team are at the gate at each pick-up and drop-off, addressing all the children by name.'

The aspects identified for improvement at the last inspection have been addressed successfully. Pupils make good progress across a range of subjects. Work is pitched more accurately so that pupils achieve well. There is, however, a little inconsistency in the expectations for achievement across the classes. The proportion of pupils achieving the age-related or higher standards by the end of Year 6 has increased year on year since the last inspection. In 2018, standards in reading, writing and mathematics were above the national averages.

Your checks on pupils' progress and the strengths and weaknesses of the school are robust and based on a range of monitoring activities. These effectively drive and give a clear steer for school improvement. Your improvement plans have helpful milestones for success which enable you, senior leaders and governors to evaluate effectively the success of the actions you are taking and to accurately determine the next steps. Your improvement plans show that you acknowledge the further work to be done to build on the successful actions already taken to develop your curriculum.

Leaders at all levels are enthusiastic and well informed in their areas of responsibility. Leaders provide effective training, support and guidance to colleagues. Their work has a positive impact on improvement. Work in pupils' mathematics books, for example, and the school's assessment of pupils' progress show that the actions taken by leaders are making a difference and improving pupils' achievement. Leaders acknowledge that the curriculum has been enlivened and enriched but needs more work.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and meet statutory requirements. There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school, and pupils are well protected and looked after. Pupils working around the school pond, for example, were given clear reminders about staying safe. Staff have a clear understanding of their responsibilities because they receive regular training and updates to include any change or additions to the guidance. There are clear procedures, which are well known to staff, should they have any concerns.

Currently, records of concerns and follow-up work are detailed and of a good quality. This enables information to be shared efficiently within school and with external agencies when necessary.

Parents and staff agree that pupils are safe in school. Pupils said that they feel safe in school, they are well looked after and they are confident to turn to adults should they have any problems. One parent summed up the positive views with the comment: 'It's important for your child to feel happy, safe and confident at school and I feel that Whitstable Junior does this brilliantly.'

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection, we agreed to focus on some key aspects of the school's work. As well as inspecting safeguarding, I explored: pupils' progress in mathematics, particularly that of girls; pupils' spelling, writing, grammar and punctuation skills; how well leaders have improved the curriculum; and the effectiveness of governance.
- You identified the issues around pupils' progress in mathematics, which, although in line with your expectations, was not as strong as progress in reading or writing. This was particularly the case for girls in 2018. You gave a convincing account that this was not a pattern or trend for girls but related to the particular cohort. However, you are continuing to be mindful of identifying any gender gaps and took action to ensure that girls currently in the school are making similar progress to boys. Knowledgeable and effective leadership in the subject has ensured that, for all pupils, there are increased opportunities for mathematical reasoning, problem-solving activities and challenging work. Pupils' work shows that they are increasingly adept at reasoning skills as the year progresses.
- By the end of Year 6 in 2018, progress in writing was considerably stronger than that in reading or mathematics. However, your monitoring and analysis identified spelling as a weaker area. Informed by educational research into the subject, you have introduced various initiatives to improve spelling. These include an online spelling programme, which pupils said they enjoy and can do at home, and celebrating spelling in assemblies. Scores are improving in weekly spelling tests and greater spelling accuracy is evident in pupils' books. Some pupils continue to make repeated errors and you are, rightly, continuing to focus on further improving spelling.
- Strong leadership has ensured that the curriculum has been enlivened and enriched. Pupils have many opportunities to learn through exciting, creative and investigative work. Several parents acknowledge this as being a significant factor in their children's enjoyment of school. One parent echoed the views of several with the comment:

'There's a wonderful creative element to the school which appears to run through many activities and learning, and makes it fun, which I guess is why my son loves it so much.'
- You have ensured that there is a strong, shared understanding of the factors that drive your curriculum. These are adventure, resilience, community,

independence, challenge and curiosity. You now have breadth in the curriculum and are unwavering in your determination to embed, refine and further enrich it. You acknowledge that the curriculum is not yet developed fully enough to ensure the depth of learning, challenge and progression of skills for all groups of pupils.

- Governance is effective. Governors are knowledgeable and well informed by leaders and by their own checks on the school. This enables them to provide a good balance of support and challenge and hold leaders to account effectively. Governors are reflective on their work and review their own effectiveness as a governing body. All statutory duties, including those for safeguarding, are met.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- as the curriculum develops further, it promotes greater depth in pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding and greater challenges for all groups of pupils.

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

Yours sincerely

Margaret Coussins
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and your assistant headteachers and your mathematics leader. I held a telephone conversation with the chair of the governing body and had a meeting with two other governors. I met with the local authority adviser. You accompanied me on visits to classes. During these visits, I spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at their work. I spoke to pupils around the school and in the playground and asked them for their views on the school.

I reviewed the school's website and sampled a range of documents and records, including your school improvement plan and evaluation of the school's effectiveness, information about pupils' achievement and documents relating to safeguarding. I took account of 71 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 44 free-text comments, and spoke to some parents as they collected their children. I considered 29 responses to the staff survey and 106 responses to the pupil survey.