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Mr Neville Wilkinson
Principal
Littlecoates Primary Academy
Harlow Street
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Dear Mr Wilkinson

Short inspection of Littlecoates Primary Academy

Following my visit to the school on 25 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in July 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Within a caring, supportive ethos, the school motto, 'Learn together, play together, aspire together' is rooted in every aspect of your work. As a result, pupils develop as confident, resilient and successful learners who are keen to contribute to the school and wider community.

Since you became principal in September 2018, you have quickly gained the trust and respect of parents, staff and pupils. You and your leadership team have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas of development. You have been reflective and forward thinking, and you have ensured that pastoral support for all pupils is given high priority.

Your curriculum provides pupils with a wide range of interesting experiences to develop their learning and confidence. For example, pupils in Year 5 were keen to tell me of a recent visit by the local Member of Parliament to their school. They valued the opportunity to discuss local issues which were important to them and were interested to learn more about democracy in modern Britain.

Governors and trust leaders are well informed and make regular visits to ensure that they have insight into the impact of the school's work. They make regular checks of the school's performance to challenge, as well as to commend, you and other leaders. Consequently, they have an accurate picture of the school's strengths and further areas for improvement. For example, they know that reducing absence

remains a key priority for the school.

Pupils are courteous and polite. They behave very well in class and around school during playtimes and lunchtimes. Pupils enjoy taking part in many after-school clubs such as football, drama and board games. They also enjoy annual residential trips from Year 2 onwards. You ensure that pupils feel valued and are very well cared for. One pupil said, 'I feel safe at school, it is like my second home.'

Parents and carers share pupils' extremely positive view of the school. A typical comment on Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents, praised the commitment of all staff, describing Littlecoates Primary as a 'fabulous school where the staff go above and beyond'. Parents of children in the early years value how well their children settle into school because of the care and attention given by staff.

At the inspection of the previous school, leaders were asked to increase the proportion of outstanding teaching in order to accelerate pupils' achievement further. The support that you and your staff have received since joining Wellspring Academy Trust in July 2016 has been effective. Staff value the wide range of training opportunities to help them to continue to develop their expertise. The quality of teaching in the school is strong and staff are motivated to learn from each other. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education. In 2018, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics was higher than levels seen nationally.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders ensure that safeguarding arrangements are thorough and fit for purpose. Recruitment and vetting checks are appropriately carried out on the suitability of staff to work with children.

You ensure that staff receive regular training about safeguarding. This makes sure they have accurate knowledge about the potential risks that pupils face. Your staff are clear about the procedures that they must follow if they become concerned about a child. You ensure that safeguarding issues are dealt with swiftly and effectively.

Pupils feel safe in school. The school's curriculum enables them to develop a good understanding of the different types of bullying. However, pupils and parents confirm that it rarely happens in their school and are reassured that it is always dealt with.

Inspection findings

- The inspection focused on a number of key lines of enquiry. The first of these was to check how regularly pupils attend school. This is because attendance was below levels seen nationally in 2018 and a higher than average proportion of

pupils were persistently absent from school.

- As a result of your leaders' actions, the proportion of pupils who are absent or persistently absent from school has reduced this year. However, more needs to be done to reduce this further, particularly for disadvantaged pupils. Pupils say that they enjoy coming to school and recognise the importance of attending regularly. You provide a free breakfast club which is popular. Pupils aspire to achieve 100% attendance each half term as they are motivated by the incentives you provide. You ensure that procedures are in place to follow up absences and seek explanations as to the reasons why pupils are not in school.
- For my second key line of enquiry, I considered how well pupils are doing in reading. This is because in recent years, pupils' progress in reading at the end of Year 6 has been slower than in other subjects. You and your leaders have identified the reasons why pupils' progress in reading has been slower than in writing and mathematics. These include ensuring that pupils choose to read more regularly and for pleasure, and ensuring that teaching deepens pupils' knowledge of vocabulary. In some classes, teaching does not sufficiently develop pupils' knowledge of unfamiliar words.
- You and other leaders have taken effective action to promote reading by, for example, developing a new library area, which pupils use purposefully to strengthen their reading skills. In addition, you have widened the range of fiction texts available to pupils. Pupils told me that they are enjoying reading these books.
- Work in pupils' books confirms that progress for all groups of pupils is good. Teachers' subject knowledge is secure, and they question pupils well. The progress that pupils make in key stage 1 is particularly strong. Throughout key stages 1 and 2, pupils use their knowledge of phonics to link letters and sounds increasingly effectively. This enables them to become fluent readers. Pupils who are falling behind are quickly identified and given appropriate support to catch up.
- I was keen to find out about the new strategies that have been recently introduced in Years 4 and 5 to improve pupils' vocabulary and other reading skills, such as how to infer meaning. Pupils in these classes now read harder texts and spend longer gaining a greater depth of understanding from what they read. Work in pupils' books confirms that this approach has improved their reading skills. Your plans to implement this approach across the whole school from September 2019 are well considered.
- My final key line of enquiry was to check how well pupils develop their writing skills in key stage 2. This was because progress has fallen over the last three years. In 2018, the progress made by disadvantaged pupils in this subject was below average.
- Pupils' work in books confirms that they make good progress from their individual starting points. The recently appointed subject leader for English is proactive and knowledgeable about the subject. Leaders check on the quality of teaching and learning frequently and provide staff with good support. This has led to a more consistent and effective approach to the teaching of writing. Teachers now ensure that pupils are clear about what they have to learn and how well they are

doing. Staff use assessment information well to inform future lessons. Pupils edit and improve their own and other pupils' writing with confidence. These changes have led to current improvements.

- Leaders ensure that key grammar, punctuation and spelling are taught regularly in all classes. Where this is done well, pupils benefit from extensive opportunities to accurately apply their knowledge to longer, more complex pieces of writing. For example, in a Year 4 English lesson, pupils used imperatives and modal verbs accurately while writing a set of instructional texts about how to make a paper aeroplane. However, when we considered work in pupils' books, we identified that this is not yet consistently evident in all classes.
- During the inspection, we saw that the quality of handwriting across the school is variable. Pupils' handwriting is often difficult to read and not well formed. Your own self-evaluation has identified this, and plans are in place to make necessary improvements.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to reduce rates of absence and persistent absence, especially for disadvantaged pupils
- the teaching of reading continues to improve so that all pupils develop their knowledge of vocabulary and make better progress from their starting points
- pupils in key stage 2 have greater opportunities to apply their knowledge of grammar and punctuation to longer, more complex pieces of writing
- pupils' handwriting is improved so that it becomes neat, legible and well formed.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the chief executive officer of the Wellspring Academy Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for North East Lincolnshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Paul Plumridge
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, the assistant principal, a group of teachers, two pastoral managers and five governors. I also met with two representatives from the multi-academy trust. I spoke with pupils informally, in classrooms and when walking around the school. I met with a group of pupils from key stage 2 and listened to three Year 1 pupils read. I looked at work in pupils' books with your English leader and assistant principal. I examined policies and procedures for the safeguarding of pupils, along with records and checks carried out

on staff working at the school. I reviewed and discussed a range of other documents, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan, documents relating to information on attendance, behaviour records, minutes of governing body meetings and the records of the monitoring of teaching and learning. I looked at the school's website. I considered the views of the 16 parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I also spoke to four parents and one grandparent on the playground before the school day started. I analysed the 23 staff views via the staff questionnaire. There were no pupil responses to the online questionnaire.