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Dear Mrs Woollacott

Short inspection of Westwood First School

Following my visit to the school on 2 November 2016, 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 June 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. 'Teachers help us to be the best we can be', commented a number of pupils when they were asked about their school. You, the staff and governors are continually refining the way in which to work so that you can help pupils to make good progress by the time they leave school at the end of Year 4. Together, you ensure that pupils become confident individuals who enjoy learning and are kind and friendly.

'The school has strong leadership, and staff use positive strategies very effectively to stimulate learning in a wide variety of ways', wrote one parent on the Ofsted online questionnaire. This is a commonly held view of the school among the vast majority of parents. Most of the parents I spoke with and who completed the questionnaire were very complimentary about you, the staff and the care that you all show towards their children.

Following the previous inspection, leaders were asked to raise achievement in writing in Years 1 to 4, especially for the most able. The actions taken to improve pupils' writing have had a beneficial impact. Work in pupils' current books shows that the most able pupils make particularly rapid progress. Their writing is interesting, imaginative and well organised. In contrast, and in a few classes, pupils of average ability do not have sufficient opportunities to develop and extend their writing skills. This occasionally restricts the progress they make.

You were also asked at the last inspection to ensure that teachers' marking helped pupils to understand how to improve their work. Following a consultation with staff, you revised the school's marking policy. Discussions with pupils confirm that pupils find the comments from teachers helpful. Work in pupils' books shows that pupils know what they need to do to correct any errors in their work.

Governors were asked to make a greater contribution towards checking the work of the school. They responded with enthusiasm to this and promptly organised a range of relevant training. Members of the governing body know the school well. They keep a close check on the achievement of different groups of pupils. Governors ask school leaders pertinent questions about the difference leaders' actions are making to the quality of teaching and pupils' learning.

In 2016, standards at the end of key stage 1 were broadly average in reading and mathematics and a little higher than this in writing. Your own information about pupils' achievement and work in pupils' books confirms that standards continue to rise from this point and many pupils exceed the standards expected for their age by the end of Year 4. Nonetheless, senior leaders and governors have accurately identified that, throughout the school, some disadvantaged pupils do not achieve as well as other pupils nationally.

Safeguarding is effective.

'The children always come first', commented a lunchtime supervisor. Pupils certainly confirm this to be the case. They told me that adults in school always take the time to listen and that they feel safe because teachers, teaching assistants and lunchtime supervisors take good care of them. Pupils of all ages have a thorough understanding of how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations. They spoke eloquently, for instance, about the importance of keeping away from fireworks at this time of the year and about withholding personal information when using the internet. All the parents I spoke with and all of the parents who completed the Ofsted questionnaire confirmed that their children feel safe at school.

You and the governors make sure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and school records relating to keeping pupils safe are appropriately detailed. Senior leaders and staff make sure that swift action is taken in relation to any concerns about individual pupils. You work well with different agencies to make sure that pupils and their families receive the support that they need.

Inspection findings

- You are an effective leader who has high aspirations for pupils. Staff and governors work in partnership with you so that all pupils achieve well, academically and socially.
- You, senior leaders and governors have a crystal-clear understanding of the school's strengths and the relative weaknesses in teaching and pupils' learning. The school improvement plan accurately identifies where improvements are required and the actions that will be taken to continue raising standards and

improving teaching.

- Work in pupils' books shows that any differences in the attainment of boys and girls are reducing quickly. Teachers across the school make sure that the work they set motivates all pupils. During my visits to lessons, I observed boys and girls equally engaged and enjoying their activities. In one class, pupils were completely captivated as they used an image of a library with 'flying' books to help them write. 'As quickly as a motorbike, I entered the library. It was chaotic inside!' exclaimed one pupil to his classmates.
- Last academic year, senior leaders undertook a detailed analysis of the achievement of disadvantaged pupils in the early years and in Years 1 to 4. You found that disadvantaged pupils were not attaining as well as other pupils nationally. In response to this finding, you and the governors reviewed the use of pupil premium expenditure and made appropriate changes to the additional support available for these pupils. You also asked staff to pay closer attention to these pupils during lessons. You recognise that, although these combined actions are helping to diminish differences, there are some disadvantaged pupils who are capable of reaching higher standards than they are at present.
- Most teachers plan mathematical activities that effectively help pupils to develop their reasoning and problem-solving skills. The most able pupils are often asked to solve complex problems that successfully build on what they already know and extend their mathematical learning. However, there are instances when some teachers miss the chance to set pupils of different abilities suitably challenging mathematical activities. Similarly, there are occasions when a few staff do not give pupils, especially those of average ability, the chance to extend and develop their ideas when writing. Senior leaders are planning to provide staff with training in relation to both of these aspects.
- Pupils told me that they have a good selection of reading books in school and that they enjoy reading because the books are exciting. The most able pupils read with confidence and expression. They use information in the text to describe astutely how characters are feeling. The least able readers use their knowledge of phonics well to read unfamiliar words. They will often return to a word and repeat it carefully when they know they have not pronounced it correctly.
- You have recently revised the way in which you and other senior leaders check the quality of teaching and pupils' learning. There is a strong focus on the achievement of different groups when visiting lessons, reviewing pupils' work and when talking to pupils. Together with the relevant teachers, senior leaders agree the actions that need to be taken to raise pupils' achievement further. They also make clear when they will check that the agreed actions have been implemented. However, sometimes this advice is too vague and does not give teachers a clear understanding of what they need to do to raise pupils' attainment further.
- Staff and governors make sure that pupils' views are valued and that they have the chance to influence changes in the school. Pupils of all ages enjoy taking on additional roles and responsibilities. The 'pupil sports crew', for example, works with staff to plan and organise a range of sporting events. Similarly, the 'pupil

rights champions' promote the rights of children in the school, in their community and as global citizens through information leaflets and fund-raising events.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- disadvantaged pupils reach even higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics
- teachers plan activities that give all pupils the chance to develop their reasoning and problem-solving skills in mathematics and the opportunity to develop and extend their writing skills
- during review meetings, leaders' advice is clearer so that teachers know what to do to raise the achievement of different 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 Staffordshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Usha Devi
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you, the two deputy headteachers and the leaders with responsibility for English, mathematics and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. I also met with the chair of the governing body and three other governors. I had a telephone conversation with a local authority representative. You joined me on brief visits to all classes. We looked at examples of pupils' mathematics and writing work and we talked to pupils about their learning. I spoke informally with pupils at different points during the school day and I listened to some pupils read from Years 2 and 4. I spoke with parents at the start of the school day. I reviewed a range of documentation including the school's own evaluation of its performance, documents related to keeping pupils safe and the most recent information about pupils' achievement. This inspection focused particularly on the achievement of disadvantaged pupils across the school and whether there were any differences in the achievement of boys and girls in English and mathematics.