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Mrs Alison Garbett
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Garbett

Short inspection of Westonzoyland Community Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 27 February 2018, 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. On taking up your post as headteacher in September 2017, you quickly established a precise understanding of the school's performance. Following a period of instability in the school's leadership, you are now providing strong and determined direction, setting high expectations for teaching and learning. You are ambitious for the school and, together with your leadership team, are driving forward the school's continuous improvement. As a result, your actions have brought about rapid and sustained progress in raising pupils' achievement. Leaders have successfully addressed the areas for improvement in the previous inspection report, while maintaining the school's strengths.

Governors have a very good understanding of their strategic role and know what the school does well and what it still needs to work on. They act with belief, providing leaders with an appropriate balance of challenge and support. Governors share your high aspirations for what pupils can achieve. They are knowledgeable, perceptive and committed in their work.

You draw on the strengths of middle leaders well to assist you in raising standards. The newly appointed middle leaders for English and mathematics are passionate about their work and carry out their roles and responsibilities with diligence. They make effective use of assessment information to inform their actions and are well focused on supporting teaching staff. However, you recognise that middle leaders have yet to develop their skills and expertise fully in monitoring and evaluating the

quality of teaching and learning. You also recognise that pupils need to use their skills in writing at length routinely across the wider curriculum.

You have quickly secured the support of a highly devoted and hard-working staff. All staff who responded to the survey said that they enjoy working at this school and are treated fairly. They unanimously agree that you use training to encourage, support and challenge their development.

Pupils behave well. They are confident and self-assured. They make good progress because of their extremely positive attitudes to learning. My visit to the pre-school and early years settings highlighted children's interest and enjoyment in their learning. Teachers and teaching assistants are patient and attentive to children's individual needs. Children behave well in the early years and pre-school, and they feel safe.

The large majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, agree that pupils are happy, feel safe and are well looked after. Parents say that Westonzoyland Primary is a friendly and welcoming school. They say that pupils are enthusiastic about their learning. For example, a comment written by one parent, typical of many, was, 'Teachers go out of their way to ensure each pupil is treated as an individual and is praised for their own personal achievements.'

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a school-wide approach to keeping pupils safe. All safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Systems to identify pupils who may be at risk of harm are effective. My discussions with pupils showed that they feel safe and happy at school, and have a trusted adult they can go to with a worry or a concern. They speak knowledgeably about how to stay safe online and are clear on what they should do if they fall victim to cyber bullying.

You ensure that all staff are appropriately trained. Consequently, they have the necessary expertise to recognise the signs of potential abuse quickly. You work effectively with outside agencies and are persistent in securing suitable and timely responses to your concerns. You have appropriate recruitment procedures which ensure that staff are suitable to work with children. Governors routinely check the effectiveness of the school's work to keep pupils safe.

Part of our discussions around safeguarding focused on pupils' attendance. This is because in 2015 and 2016 rates of absence were above the national average. You have put a range of measures in place to check and improve pupils' attendance. You ensure that poor attendance is not allowed to go unchallenged. These actions are proving to be successful because attendance is improving for individuals and groups.

Inspection findings

- I examined leaders' actions to ensure that pupils, including the disadvantaged, make strong progress in writing in key stage 1. In the 2016 and 2017 teachers' assessments, pupils' attainment in writing was below the national average. You have implemented a range of strategies to promote pupils' skills and progress in writing. For example, training for teachers and teaching assistants has raised expectations of what pupils can achieve. As a result, pupils are now demonstrating sustained improvements in handwriting, spelling, punctuation and grammar.
- Pupils' progress in writing is accelerating. They successfully acquire a range of skills that are appropriate for their age. Pupils use an increasing range of writing devices and techniques to add meaning to their work. Disadvantaged pupils make strong progress from their starting points. Their work demonstrates their increasing resilience and enjoyment of writing.
- Pupils have a high degree of success in using their knowledge of phonics when attempting to write unfamiliar words. They take pride in the presentation of their writing, setting their work out carefully. Teachers and teaching assistants are adept at encouraging pupils to regularly review their writing and consider how it can be improved further. Consequently, pupils develop their use of descriptive language and their ability to write complex sentences successfully.
- I also focused on evaluating leaders' actions in ensuring that pupils in key stage 2 successfully acquire age-appropriate skills in spelling, punctuation and grammar. Leaders now ensure that pupils benefit from explicit teaching in these key areas. Pupils have time to practise and rehearse new technical skills before applying them in their independent writing. The most able pupils use an extensive range of punctuation and grammar to engage the reader. Their use of different grammatical structures and verb forms demonstrates their mastery of these techniques.
- Pupils apply their writing skills in a wide range of different genres. As a result, the accuracy of their spelling, punctuation and grammar is improving. Pupils use these skills to enhance the quality and depth of their writing. Teachers maintain high expectations for pupils' writing in different subject areas. However, pupils do not routinely write at length across the wider curriculum.
- Finally, I examined how well leaders' actions ensure that the most able pupils in key stage 2 make strong progress in mathematics. Leaders have provided teachers with training to ensure a better match between learning activities and pupils' abilities. As a result, the most able pupils are routinely required to solve rich and sophisticated problems which provide suitable challenge. Furthermore, skilful questioning by teachers is effective in encouraging pupils to expand on their mathematical reasoning and add greater depth to this.
- Leaders are alert to the needs of providing the most able with opportunities to use their skills in a variety of different contexts. For example, multi-step problems set in real-life contexts, and opportunities to verbalise mathematical reasoning, are stretching pupils' mathematical understanding.

- The most able pupils demonstrate a high level of conceptual fluency and accuracy. This equips them with the appropriate skills to tackle more challenging learning in mathematics. Pupils' work demonstrates that they regularly grapple with new concepts and consider different approaches to problem-solving. As a result, the most able pupils make strong progress in mathematics.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils are routinely provided with opportunities to write at length across the wider curriculum to use and develop their skills further
- middle leaders further develop their expertise in monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning.

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

Yours sincerely

Neil Swait
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I spoke with you and senior and middle leaders. I also spoke with staff members, four representatives of the governing body, your school improvement officer and pupils from across the school. I made visits to lessons to observe pupils' learning and to scrutinise their work.

I considered a range of documentary evidence, which included the school development plans, attendance and monitoring records, governors' minutes and safeguarding documentation.

In addition, I took account of 43 responses to Parent View and 12 responses to the staff survey. There were no responses to the pupils' survey to be taken into consideration.