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Mrs Joanna Murphy
Headteacher
Willow Grove Primary School
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Dear Mrs Murphy

Short inspection of Willow Grove Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 19 January 2016 with Dawn Platt HMI, 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 outstanding in January 2011.

This school continues to be outstanding.

The leadership team has maintained the outstanding quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Leaders seek out, with forensic precision, the root cause of pupils' behaviours as the key to releasing pupils' academic potential. Adults at the school leave no stone unturned in their effort to forge their excellent relationships with all pupils. Teachers and teaching assistants use their precise understanding of pupils' specific needs to ensure that teaching captures pupils' interest. As a result, pupils make increasingly rapid progress.

The school is calm and orderly because behaviour management strategies are applied consistently across the school. From their first day at the school, pupils' confidence and self-esteem grows, so that once again they begin to enjoy their learning. Also, pupils' attendance improves the longer they remain at the school, because they rediscover the enjoyment of success. By the time they leave Willow Grove pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their education.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that records are detailed and of high quality. Leaders act swiftly to ensure that any concerns relating to the safeguarding of pupils are accurately logged. Inspectors' scrutiny of the school's 'Cause For Concern' recording system showed that leaders do not hesitate in ensuring that the appropriate professionals are made aware of any potential situation that could cause harm to pupils. This is

strong safeguarding practice that contributes effectively to the school's work to keep pupils safe.

The school's staff are well trained in keeping pupils safe. All staff have undertaken basic training in the safeguarding of children. Senior leaders, including a governor, are undertaking training to a suitably high level. Additional training for staff in areas such as paediatric first aid, the government's 'Prevent' agenda, behaviour management strategies and how to reduce pupils' anxiety and stress, has taken place since the last inspection. These actions, along with the redesigned school entrance, help to keep pupils safe in school.

Inspection findings

- Leaders have taken appropriate action to rectify the area for improvement identified at the previous inspection. Leaders ensure that the school's Responsive Feedback policy is implemented consistently well across the school. Teachers make effective use of a wide range of feedback strategies, including verbal and non-verbal praise for example. Teachers and teaching assistants adapt well their feedback strategies to meet the specific needs of pupils. As a result, inspectors' scrutiny of a sample of pupils' work showed that no two books were alike in terms of the type of feedback pupils received from teachers. This very precise matching of feedback, in line with the school's Responsive Feedback policy, to pupils' specific needs leads to rapid progress by the vast majority of pupils.
- Leaders' records of their observations during lessons show that teaching has remained strong since the last inspection. This view was corroborated by inspectors through their observations of learning, scrutiny of pupils' work, evaluation of teachers' assessments of progress and talking to pupils. Teaching is typically very well matched to pupils' specific needs. Consequently, pupils' interest rarely wanes and strong progress is maintained throughout the lesson.
- The high-quality teaching contributes to the outstanding progress pupils often make in managing their emotions and behaviour. Training for staff in how to reduce pupils' anxiety and stress is put to excellent use in all areas of the school and particularly during lessons. A calm yet purposeful atmosphere permeates throughout the school. As a result, pupils who have experienced significant trauma and failure in their previous schools begin to respond positively to adults and to enjoy their learning.
- The school's work to promote pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is strong. The recently introduced personal, social, health and economic education programme is already having a positive impact on pupils' personal development by encouraging them to cultivate high expectations for their own future. Leaders are effective in ensuring that parents are able to play an active role in their children's development while at the school. Leaders have employed two family partnership workers in order to strengthen further the communication between school and

families. This action supports well pupils' significant improvements in reading, behaviour and their emotional development for example.

- Leaders use the school's additional funding, provided by the government for PE and primary sports, extremely well. Leaders have employed external specialist sports coaches in order to provide additional sporting experiences for pupils and to further develop the expertise of teachers in the school. The school's records show that participation in sport is very high, with pupils taking part in multi-sports competitions against other mainstream schools for example. This action is making a significant contribution towards the building of pupils' self-confidence, with many children who would previously not engage in physical activity taking part in a good range of sports.
- The school is supported and challenged well by the governing body. Records of governing body meetings show that governors ask challenging questions when the need arises, relating to the best use of the school's finances for example. The governing body has high expectations and has not sat on its laurels since the last inspection. Governors have worked closely with the local authority to undertake a self-review of the governing body's effectiveness. As a result, governance at the school is currently being restructured as a means of increasing capacity. Governors are aware that they need to bolster the expertise and experience of the governing body so that they ensure that the school remains outstanding.
- Leaders' tracking systems to monitor pupils' progress are accurate and provide valuable information to leaders in how well pupils achieve during their time at the school. Teachers know that their checks on how well pupils are progressing are accurate, because they compare pupils' work with that of pupils in mainstream schools. However, teachers do not yet compare the work of pupils from Willow Grove with that of pupils in similar outstanding schools.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- teachers broaden their links with other similar outstanding schools within the region, in order to ensure that pupils benefit from the even better sharing of strong practice among staff
- the experience and expertise of the governing body is bolstered even further, so that governors can support and challenge leaders even more effectively in order to ensure that the school continues to improve and remain outstanding

Yours sincerely

Drew Crawshaw
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

- We held conversations with you and other leaders, two governors, teachers, a small number of parents, several pupils and a representative from the local authority.
- We observed a selection of lessons across the school.
- We looked at pupils' work during our visits to classrooms. We also scrutinised samples of pupils' work displayed on walls around the school.
- We observed behaviour around the school, including observing pupils as they arrived and left the school.
- We scrutinised a wide range of documentation provided by the school, including: self-evaluation by leaders; the school's development plan; information on attendance; documents used to record behaviour and safeguarding concerns; information relating to students' progress; records of leaders' monitoring of teaching and learning and of performance management, and minutes of meetings of the governing body.