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Michael Smith
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Dear Mr Smith

Short inspection of Warrender Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 9 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 November 2011.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership of the school changed in September 2015 when you were appointed as the new headteacher. Within a very short time, you introduced important changes to the way the school is led and managed. In our discussion at the start of the inspection, we agreed that we would consider the impact of these actions on the school's effectiveness and, consequently, the capacity of the school's leadership, as a key line of enquiry.

Following your appointment, you evaluated the school's work and took swift action to re-focus attention on improving pupils' learning. You realised that pupils were at risk of coasting. My brief conversations with parents, and their responses to Ofsted's surveys, show that they appreciate the changes you have introduced. They applaud your stance to improve outcomes for their children. They see the changes as 'positive' and a 'breath of fresh air'. You have worked closely with the governing body to build a new senior team and ensure that all leaders, and staff, understand the strategic vision for the school. My discussions with governors and the local authority adviser confirm that recent staff appointments and work undertaken have contributed to the school continuing to provide a good standard of education.

The school is a strong and close-knit community which a parent described as 'a little jewel with a unique character'. This is more than evident from the way the school has responded to a recent tragic event. In spite of the sorrow you are all experiencing, strong pastoral care is ensuring that staff and pupils can continue to teach, work and learn. Pupils told me that they 'love' coming to school. The school's

vision and the new culture of high aspiration are evident in all classrooms. You have ensured that pupils understand what it means to aspire.

Yours is a small school where individuals are known. However, the school is in discussion with the local authority on the possible expansion to a two-form entry school. You have begun to make changes, such as expanding provision in the early years and developing opportunities for learning. We agreed that, in order to support this expansion, the school's development planning and self-evaluation would benefit from greater attention to detail.

Safeguarding is effective.

Senior leaders have ensured that arrangements for safeguarding pupils are secure and based on current statutory guidance. They conduct pre-employment checks carefully. Staff are kept up to date with training and briefings on national and local priorities. The school's vigilant approach works very well and teachers are aware of potential signs of risk. Procedures for reporting and recording concerns are detailed. Pupils' needs are well met as the designated safeguarding lead works thoroughly with external agencies and parents

Pupils say they are happy, safe and can turn to a member of staff at any time if they have worries. Parents agree with these views.

Inspection findings

- To test out the hypothesis that the school remains good, we agreed three lines of enquiry. All three enquiries showed that senior leaders have acted effectively to maintain a good quality of education.
- The first line of enquiry agreed explored the achievement of pupils in the Year 1 phonics check and in the national tests for Year 2 pupils in reading, writing and mathematics. Standards in phonics remained below the national average in 2016, particularly for the very few disadvantaged pupils. Similarly, the disappointing dip in the 2016 tests led you and your leadership team to identify key stage 1 as a key priority.
- You have put in place a number of measures to ensure that current pupils make better progress. These include, for example, deploying experienced staff to work in Year 1 and using a specialist to provide additional training for staff on developing pupils' skills to decode letters and pronounce unknown and tricky words. Support for pupils is now more intensive and extends to afternoon sessions. My observations in lessons, including listening to pupils read and scrutinising their books, confirmed that focused support for lower- and middle-attaining groups is making a difference and helping them make better progress.
- You have ensured that teachers are more accountable for pupils' progress. However, we agreed that your discussions with staff reviewing pupils' progress could focus even more sharply on pupils' attainment. Furthermore, these reviews do not always refer to different groups of pupils. You acknowledged that this is an area for development.

- The second line of enquiry focused on the quality of writing at key stage 2. You believe that more middle-attaining pupils and the very few disadvantaged pupils in the Year 6 class of 2015/6 could have achieved the higher level in key stage 2, and I agreed. We agreed that the most able pupils achieve very well; we both saw some well-crafted writing with these pupils demonstrating very good use of their reading skills when retrieving and using factual information.
- Your actions to improve pupils' writing are well considered and are leading to pupils' better understanding of how to use language skilfully. My discussion with pupils indicated that, although writing is not a favourite or 'fun' subject, they very much enjoy and look forward to the extended and creative writing activities. Pupils understand the importance of good literacy skills.
- Pupils are making better progress in developing good writing skills. They write for different purposes, and understand the most appropriate style and register for different types of letters, retelling or creating a story. Pupils have an increasing understanding of how to use a range of punctuation marks and grammatical features to set out their ideas accurately and effectively. This has been possible because of the more accurate planning that is now in place for teaching English. The deployment of specialist teachers and the teaching of groups by ability are contributing to pupils making better progress in developing their writing skills.
- Planning for improvement includes pupils using 'writing passports' to record and check how well they understand the writing skills they have learned. This innovative practice is making a difference to pupils receiving clear messages about their successes and how they can improve their work. It is also helping teachers to identify and address gaps in pupils' knowledge.
- You recognise that while this is proving successful, there is still more to do to ensure that the middle-attaining and disadvantaged pupils can aspire to achieve higher standards.
- The third line of enquiry considered recent changes in leadership and the capacity of leaders to sustain improvement over time. The inspection evidence found that the rigorous approach to using assessment information means that staff are being held more accountable for pupils' achievement. My review of records of progress meetings showed that teachers are identifying and addressing misconceptions in pupils' knowledge. You are regularly assessing how well pupils are achieving so teachers can correct gaps in pupils' understanding.
- The appointments of senior leaders with specific rather than general responsibilities is a change for the school. The delegation of duties has increased the capacity of leaders to manage and sustain change. However, you all recognise that although the school remains good, there is much more work to do to ensure that the school's self-evaluation is rigorous to prevent Warrender becoming a coasting school.
- You recognise that the school is poised to experience further change and that detailed, focused strategic planning is essential among all senior

leaders, including the governing body. We agreed that this is essential in order to sustain and build on the recent changes.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the strategic management of the leadership team, including the governors, is strengthened to ensure that the capacity for improvement is sustained over time, particularly as the school expands
- the changes made are sustained so that all pupils, particularly middle-attaining and disadvantaged pupils, achieve higher standards in their work.

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

Yours sincerely

Carmen Rodney

Her Majesty's Inspection

Information about the inspection

The inspection considered the actions the school is taking to ensure pupils can make better progress in key stage 1. I also considered the actions the school is taking to develop the writing skills of middle-attaining pupils and disadvantaged pupils. The final line of enquiry considered the capacity of leaders to sustain change over time.

During this inspection, I held meetings with you and other senior leaders. I met the chair of the governing body and four other governors. I held a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority. I met with the safeguarding lead and the coordinator responsible for English and also the administrator responsible for maintaining the single central record. I met with parents at the start of the day and analysed the 45 responses to Parent View, and also parents' comments to the Ofsted's online survey. I considered the views of 18 staff and 50 pupils who took part in the Ofsted survey. You accompanied me on my short visits to lessons in all year groups. I spoke to pupils in lessons about their learning and listened to Year 1 and 2 pupils read during lessons. I looked at pupils' books, met with the school council and spoke to pupils randomly during the lunch break.