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Mrs Marjorie Dean
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Dean

Short inspection of Wolverton Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 29 June 2017, 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 March 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Wolverton is a friendly and harmonious village school with a genuine family feel. Pupils like and trust adults. Adults show a high level of care for pupils. Relationships between pupils are strong. Mixed-age classes help pupils to forge friendships beyond pupils of their own age.

You provide clear, direct leadership, and this ensures that strong pastoral care is matched with high academic expectations. Standards have been maintained since the previous inspection. In recent years, pupils have made strong progress in the early years and key stage 1 and good progress in key stage 2.

You know your school well, including its many strengths and those areas that need to improve. Your efforts to improve standards in writing have borne fruit this year, as has your work to improve the mathematical attainment of the most able pupils in key stage 2. However, there remains a little way to go until standards in writing and mathematics match the high standards evident in reading.

You are well supported by an effective governing body. Governors are very committed to the school. They possess considerable expertise, but also use external support to validate the information that you give them. For example, they were involved in a recent review of teaching carried out by the local authority.

Parents value the school and the hard work of teachers and teaching assistants. You make many efforts to involve parents in the school, for example by inviting them to the recent 'farmers' market' and the 'Egyptian museum' of pupils' work. All parents whom I met as they dropped off their children at the start of the day spoke in glowing terms about the school. One parent who responded to Parent View summed up the views of many when they wrote:

'Since my child started at this school, I have been totally impressed with every aspect of her education, development and confidence to be successful in her future life. I cannot praise this school enough for its hard work in ensuring that all pupils are given the opportunity to thrive in this ever-changing world.'

In the previous inspection's report, you were charged with improving the quality of teaching, including teachers' expectations and pupils' interest and ability to work independently. Teaching is now strong throughout the school. Teachers have high expectations of pupils, and they plan engaging lessons and activities. Consequently, pupils enjoy learning and work consistently well, whether in small groups or by themselves.

Safeguarding is effective.

Pupils whom I spoke with during the inspection told me that they feel safe in school. They understand different forms of bullying and they told me that bullying is very rare. Every pupil whom I spoke to said that they trust their teachers and other adults to deal with bullying or any other problem that they might have. Pupils have been taught well about how to keep themselves safe from a range of potential dangers. For example, pupils are very clear about how to stay safe when using the internet.

Parents are equally positive about their children's safety. All parents whom I spoke with, and all who completed Parent View, said that their child feels safe in school. Almost all agree that their child is happy in school as well.

The school's safeguarding policies and procedures are clear and fit for purpose. Records are detailed, well organised and stored securely. Staff and governors have been comprehensively trained in safeguarding matters, including those that they are unlikely to encounter, given the school's context. All understand that keeping pupils safe is their top priority and are vigilant to any sign that a child might need extra help. Procedures to recruit staff safely are understood and used well. Recent work to improve fencing at the front of the school has enhanced the site's security.

Inspection findings

- The first area that I considered during the inspection was the discrepancy between outcomes in reading and writing at the end of key stage 2. Pupils make an excellent start with reading in Reception and key stage 1. Adults teach phonics extremely effectively.

Pupils apply their understanding of letters and sounds well and quickly become

fluent readers. Reading remains strong throughout the rest of the school. A stimulating, well-stocked library and good parental support both contribute to this. You have made improving writing a high priority in recent years. You have introduced a common approach to handwriting and supported teachers with their planning to inspire pupils to want to write. Staff have also undertaken training in teaching grammar, punctuation and spelling. All of these actions are yielding improvements. For example, books now contain well-presented pieces of extended writing. However, pupils continue to be more enthusiastic readers than writers. Consequently, although improving, writing still lags a little behind reading.

- The inspection's second focus area was mathematics in key stage 2, especially the teaching of the most able pupils. Although pupils enjoy mathematics and make good progress in key stage 2, outcomes at the end of Year 6 in 2016 showed no pupils working at greater depth. You have made improving mathematics teaching a focus for this year. You have reviewed the mathematics curriculum to make sure that pupils spend sufficient time on topics. You have also provided training for staff in developing pupils' basic skills, problem solving and reasoning. Pupils develop strong arithmetic skills. They are increasingly able to use these skills fluently when solving problems. However, pupils' ability to reason and to explain their thinking is less well developed. Although teachers provide problems that ask pupils to reason and explain, pupils' explanations are often cursory and do not suggest that they have thought hard about their responses.
- The third question that I considered was whether high standards in the early years and key stage 1 have been maintained. Teaching in the early years has remained strong. A committed team constantly seeks ways in which to improve. For example, better checks on children's progress this year have helped adults to step in more quickly when a child needs extra help. Leaders plan the curriculum well and Reception provides a stimulating environment, both inside and outside. Consequently, children become confident and articulate. They are particularly strong readers.
- High expectations are also evident in key stage 1. Adults do not speak down to pupils, but model mature, age-appropriate vocabulary. Pupils respond in kind. Well-established routines mean that pupils work well in groups or independently. They move between activities with a minimum of fuss, so little time is wasted. Pupils are keen to do well. They work hard and make rapid progress as a result.
- The inspection's final focus area was on standards of behaviour and attendance in school. Attendance has been higher than the national average for primary schools in recent years, and it remains so this year. Pupils behave well in lessons. They are thoughtful, enthusiastic learners who work hard and are keen to do well. Pupils cooperate well and encourage each other to do their best. Classrooms are typically purposeful places where pupils enjoy learning. Pupils also behave well at social times. They play together sensibly and they look after each other. Several pupils told me that they have friends of different ages and how older pupils help younger ones.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils are better able to think and explain their reasoning when solving mathematical problems
- pupils' writing continues to improve so that it matches their high standard of reading.

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

Yours sincerely

Alun Williams
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and other leaders. I visited several classes during the day with you, where we observed teaching and learning and spoke with pupils about their work. I talked with many pupils in lessons, and at breaktime and lunchtime. I met with the chair and vice-chair of the governing body. I scrutinised several documents, including your self-evaluation, minutes of governing body meetings, and safeguarding and child protection records. I talked with several parents as they dropped their children off at the start of the school day. I considered 18 responses to Parent View, including 10 'free text' comments, one letter from a parent and seven responses from members of staff to the online inspection questionnaire.