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Mrs Fran Rusbridge  
Interim Executive Headteacher  
Willesborough Junior School  
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Dear Mrs Rusbridge

### **Short inspection of Willesborough Junior School**

Following my visit to the school on 9 January 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 May 2014.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Since joining the school in May 2017, you have worked tirelessly to develop a skilled and unified leadership team which is focused on moving the school forward and improving standards. You have led the school with a determination that aspires to ensure that pupils receive the highest standard of education, and have gained the trust of staff during a period of difficult transition. As a result, staff speak highly of your leadership and the opportunities that you give them to develop professionally.

The local authority has provided an increased level of high-quality support to the school during the past two years, particularly prior to the start of your leadership in May 2017 during a period where standards had declined. Swift intervention from the local authority has helped to address key leadership priorities, and leaders have welcomed this support. You have worked closely with the neighbouring infant school to ensure that pupils' transition from Year 2 is a smooth one and that pupils get off to the best possible start in Year 3.

You have worked hard, and continue to address the areas for improvement identified at the time of the school's last inspection. Inspectors required leaders to ensure that pupils use accurate spelling in their written work and apply their calculation skills to solve mathematical problems. Inspectors also asked leaders to make sure that pupils use their information and communication technology skills

across the curriculum. Pupils' progress in spelling has rapidly increased since September because of middle leaders' highly focused intervention work. However, leaders are aware that pupils' attainment in this area still needs to be improved. Pupils are regularly applying their calculation skills to a wide range of problem-solving and reasoning challenges. Consequently, pupils are making strong progress in mathematics. Leaders regularly review the curriculum in order to improve pupils' engagement and motivation to learn. Recent work has resulted in increased opportunities for pupils to use their technological skills across the wider curriculum. This is having a positive impact on their learning, both inside the school and outside.

The majority of parents and carers are positive about the recent changes to leadership and other aspects of the school. For example, one parent stated: 'The school has made amazing progress over the past year and is continuing to do so. I am pleased with the changes that have been made and I know that any future changes implemented will also benefit the children greatly.' Most parents spoken to, along with those who expressed their views on the Ofsted survey, Parent View, said that communication between home and school is a real strength. Parents praised the recent introduction of school initiatives such as 'walk-in Wednesdays' and 'the learning café', and feel that these help them to support their children's learning at home.

Governors have made a strong contribution to the strategic leadership of the school over the past year, often having to make difficult but necessary decisions in order to improve the quality of the provision. The governing body is an effective team that adds to the capacity of the school to improve further. Governors have an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and are determined to address any areas for improvement. Due to the recent restructuring of the school's leadership team, governors have rightly focused on providing stability to the school during this transition period. However, they have not been sufficiently consistent in holding leaders robustly to account for pupils' outcomes.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Arrangements to safeguard pupils are effective. Thorough policies and procedures are embedded in the school's safeguarding culture and ethos. Staff have an accurate understanding of their responsibilities and are alert to any sign that a pupil might be at risk. Staff know and follow the correct procedures for passing concerns to the leaders responsible for safeguarding.

Leaders work well together and with external agencies to support vulnerable pupils and their families. This support is enhanced through the dedicated work of the school's family liaison officer. Checks on the suitability of all staff, including regular visitors, are thorough. External audits of safeguarding by the local authority help governors check that arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## Inspection findings

- During this inspection, we agreed to look at the effectiveness of safeguarding; how successfully the new leadership structure is ensuring that the quality of teaching and learning across the school enables pupils to make good progress; the extent to which leaders have addressed the underachievement of disadvantaged pupils; and the impact that leaders and governors have had on improving attendance and outcomes for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities.
- The quality of teaching and learning across the school is good. Leaders have accurately identified the strengths of the school and are open and honest about what could be even better. The recently reorganised leadership team has rightly focused sharply on improving pupils' outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics. Leaders have a clear aim on enhancing the quality of teaching and learning across the school and have implemented a number of effective changes to improve standards. As a result, pupils are currently making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Scrutiny of pupils' work, and observations in classrooms, demonstrate that most pupils are making strong, and sometimes rapid, progress in English and mathematics. Leaders have correctly identified that teachers' expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving in science now need to increase in order to mirror those seen in English and mathematics.
- In the past, disadvantaged pupils' rates of progress were well below those of non-disadvantaged pupils. Ineffective use of the pupil premium funding meant that these pupils did not receive the support necessary to catch up quickly. However, the new leadership team has worked well to address this issue. Improvements to the progress-tracking of disadvantaged pupils and the appropriate use of additional funding have enabled leaders to implement effective interventions that support these pupils. As a result, a high proportion of disadvantaged pupils are making good progress and many are making accelerated progress. This is helping them to diminish the difference between their achievement and that of other pupils nationally.
- Leaders work hard to make sure that pupils attend school every day, and use incentives to encourage pupils to come to school when they are reluctant to do so. The school works closely with families whose children take too many days off school, particularly those who have SEN and/or disabilities. This is having a positive effect at an individual level. Consequently, the attendance of pupils with SEN and/or disabilities has improved.
- Pupils with SEN and/or disabilities are making good progress in relation to their starting points. Leaders' checks on the quality of teaching and learning provide them with accurate information about the progress different groups of pupils are making. Leaders are determined to further accelerate the progress that these pupils make, and have the capacity to achieve this.
- On occasion, teachers' planning does not consistently meet the individual needs of pupils. As a result, pupils, including those who have SEN and/or disabilities, are sometimes less engaged in tasks and their progress is slowed.

## **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- information about what pupils can do and understand is used by all staff to plan learning that meets all pupils' individual needs
- teachers' high expectations of pupils in English and mathematics are mirrored across the wider curriculum, including science, so that pupils make rapid progress in these subjects also
- they strengthen the role that governors play in holding leaders to account for pupils' outcomes.

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

Yours sincerely

Emma Sanderson  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

I met with you and your senior leadership team at the start of the day. We discussed your evaluation of the school's effectiveness and agreed the key areas I would focus on during the inspection. During the day, I held further discussions with you and your team. I met with the chair and one other member of the governing body. I observed learning in a number of lessons with senior leaders. I also scrutinised pupils' work with middle leaders. I took account of 11 staff survey responses and 42 responses by parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 21 free-text responses. I spoke with parents before school and with staff and pupils throughout the day. I analysed a range of the school's documentation, including leaders' checks on pupils' progress, information regarding the quality of teaching and learning, and safeguarding policies and procedures. A meeting was held with the local authority improvement adviser linked to the school.