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Ms Sue Stanley
Headteacher
Willow Tree Primary School
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Dear Ms Stanley

Short inspection of Willow Tree Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 16 January 2018 with Karen Matthews, Ofsted Inspector, 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 October 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. You set clear expectations for staff and pupils, underpinned by your school vision of 'Inspiring Learners for Life'.

You have created a vibrant and inclusive school. This is recognised by staff, pupils and parents and carers. One parent reported that she is extremely happy with the support that her child, who has special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, is receiving. Another reported that her child has 'come on in leaps and bounds' since starting at the school. Pupils are also proud of their school. They work hard, are keen to talk about their achievements and play an active part in the life of the school. Pupils who have the roles of 'reading and mathematics ambassadors' encourage other less-confident pupils in lessons.

You have a good understanding of what action needs to be taken to address current areas of underperformance. Since the previous inspection, leaders have tackled the weaker issues in mathematics so that pupils now have more opportunities to apply mathematical skills in lessons. However, you are aware that you need to build on these improvements and strengthen the quality of teaching still further. This is particularly the case for mathematics teaching across key stage 2.

You were also asked to ensure that the most able pupils were sufficiently challenged. Leaders are putting in place effective actions to improve the provision and quality of teaching for this group. Overall, the attainment of the most able pupils is increasing.

Nevertheless, you recognise that there is more work to do to improve outcomes in reading and mathematics in key stage 2 so that the most able pupils routinely attain the standards of which they are capable.

You have recently created new leadership positions for existing middle managers in order to distribute leadership responsibilities more widely. However, these new leaders require further training so that they have a strong impact on improving teaching and pupils' outcomes further.

Governors know the school well and demonstrate a clear understanding of their strategic role in both supporting and challenging you and your leaders on key aspects of the school's work. This includes asking relevant and probing questions relating to pupils' outcomes. They ensure that the pupil premium funding is spent appropriately and targeted to meet the needs of the school's disadvantaged pupils.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong and effective culture of safeguarding in the school. School leaders and governors fulfil their statutory responsibilities to help keep pupils safe. The single central register meets requirements and is checked at regular intervals by the governors. Safeguarding policies and procedures are also reviewed regularly. High-quality and detailed records are stored securely to ensure confidentiality. All staff and governors receive timely training to develop their understanding and skills to identify concerns relating to child protection. Records show that pupils who have been identified as being at risk are supported sensitively and promptly by staff who know pupils and their families well. The majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire said that their children are well cared for, happy and kept safe in school. Pupils also reported that they know who to speak to if they have any concerns.

Inspection findings

- At the beginning of the inspection, we agreed key lines of enquiry to evaluate the quality of education. The first one reviewed the actions leaders are taking to increase progress and standards in reading overall and in mathematics for girls. In reading, this is because, in 2016 and 2017, progress made by pupils and standards attained by the end of key stage 2 were lower than the national averages.
- You and your leaders are taking effective steps to improve pupils' outcomes in reading. Actions are sharply focused on improving teachers' subject knowledge. A new reading approach has been implemented which focuses on the explicit teaching of reading skills. In key stage 2, pupils were observed using and applying these new reading strategies effectively. For example, pupils confidently explained how the author uses inference in the text. The impact of leaders' work is clearly evident in the increasing proportion of pupils who are making good progress in reading across the school.
- In mathematics, you have put in place a programme of support and reorganised the teaching of mathematics in Year 6 so that more attention is given to meeting

pupils' needs. More girls are now assessed as working above the standard expected for their age. During our learning walk in upper key stage 2, girls displayed a positive attitude towards mathematics, with many reporting to an inspector that they greatly enjoy the subject. While leaders' actions have strengthened the quality of mathematics teaching, more work is needed to embed these changes so that all groups of pupils achieve to the very best of their ability across key stage 2.

- We agreed to focus the second line of enquiry on the effectiveness of leaders' actions to support the most able pupils. In 2016, with the exception of writing at key stage 2, the proportions of pupils attaining the higher levels at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 were below the national averages. To address this, leaders have prioritised ensuring that the most able pupils are routinely challenged from the moment they join the school. In the early years, leaders have implemented precisely targeted support for the most able children. For example, teachers plan activities that capture children's interests early and stretch their skills and understanding. Leaders have focused additional support in the early years to support the most able children to make good gains in their language development. This has been particularly effective in responding to the needs of the high proportion of pupils and children who speak English as an additional language. The impact of these changes is evident at the end of key stage 1. In 2017, there was clear improvement in pupils' outcomes. The proportion of pupils reaching a greater depth by the end of key stage 1 was in line with the national average.
- Less success for the most able pupils was seen in the 2017 results at the end of Year 6. In reading and mathematics, the proportions of pupils achieving the highest standards were below the national averages. Nevertheless, across key stage 2, you have sustained the focus on the most able pupils and teachers now ensure that these pupils typically make good gains in their learning. This is because teachers plan work to challenge pupils' thinking. However, some teachers are unclear about what pupils have to do to reach the higher standard. This prevents them from planning activities which are precisely matched to pupils' needs.
- We also agreed to focus a key line of enquiry on the school's use of the pupil premium funding and the impact that this is having on improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. The pupil premium strategy is clearly detailed on the school's website and outlines how the funding is being used to reduce differences in outcomes for identified pupils and groups. For example, through funding places at the breakfast club, leaders have improved pupils' attendance and punctuality. This also ensures that pupils get a smooth start to the day and are ready to learn. Also, additional reading support in key stage 1 continues to have a positive impact on pupils' outcomes in phonics. Results of the Year 1 phonics screening check are consistently strong over time. Actions taken by school leaders are therefore reducing differences in outcomes between the school's disadvantaged pupils and their peers. School leaders have rightly extended their focus on improving the achievement of disadvantaged children by the end of the early years.
- The final line of enquiry related to actions being taken by leaders to reduce fixed-term exclusions. This was because, over time, the proportion of fixed-term and

repeat exclusions had been higher than that seen nationally.

- School leaders engage closely with external agencies to support vulnerable pupils. As a result, pupils' needs are assessed thoroughly and they benefit from the support they need to learn well. The school's pastoral team works effectively with families and children at risk of exclusion to both reduce exclusions and improve attendance. School records show that the number of exclusions is reducing and is now significantly lower than the figures seen in previous years.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- middle leaders develop their skills so that they have a greater impact on improving the quality of teaching and learning, and raising pupils' achievement further, particularly in reading and mathematics
- the quality of teaching is strengthened further, particularly in key stage 2, to maximise the progress made by all groups of pupils, including the most able, in reading and mathematics.

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

Yours sincerely

Calvin Henry
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, the inspectors held meetings with you, your deputy headteachers and assistant headteachers, middle leaders and the school's business manager. They met with all staff at the beginning of the day. The lead inspector met with one school governor and had a telephone conversation with another during the same meeting. The lead inspector also met the local authority school improvement adviser.

The inspectors visited classes across the early years, key stage 1 and key stage 2 and one inspector did a learning walk of communal spaces throughout the school.

The inspectors had conversations with pupils during their lessons and at playtime and listened to pupils in key stages 1 and 2 read. They also scrutinised pupils' work.

The lead inspector considered the 21 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. He also considered the 58 responses to the staff questionnaire.

The inspectors scrutinised a range of school documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and development planning, the school's assessment information and safeguarding policies and procedures.