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18 April 2018

Andrew Sewell  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Sewell

### **Short inspection of Walcott Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 21 March 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 September 2014.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as result of this inspection.**

At the start of the inspection, we agreed the key lines of enquiry I would investigate to test whether the school remains good. These included the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection.

Leaders were asked to develop further the language and reading skills of pupils to help them become better writers. Leaders have been partially effective in addressing this priority. In the early years, leaders have focused on developing children's communication, speech and language skills. Children have received focused support. Staff promote children's language skills well. For example, I observed the teacher working with a group of children with toy cars, encouraging the children to predict and explain what they thought would happen next in a given situation. Leaders have reorganised and developed the phonics programme in the early years and key stage 1. In key stage 1, pupils now complete daily writing tasks so they can better apply their developing reading skills to their writing.

At the previous inspection, leaders were also asked to ensure that teachers provide pupils with challenging tasks to improve pupils' progress. This has not been addressed consistently. Some teachers are more effective in asking pupils challenging questions and giving them challenging tasks to complete. Sometimes, however, teachers do not use information about pupils' learning well enough to ensure that tasks are matched

well to pupils' abilities. As a result, some pupils do not make as much progress as they should. Pupils generally listen well and apply themselves to all that is asked of them. However, some lose focus when activities or teaching are not appropriate to their abilities.

In English, leaders have improved the extent to which pupils write at length. Pupils show stamina in writing, often across different subjects. However, teachers' expectations for the quality of pupils' writing are not consistently high. As a result, some pupils' progress in writing is not as rapid as it should be.

In mathematics, some teachers ensure that pupils gain a deeper understanding of mathematical concepts. However, this is also not consistent. Consequently, some pupils, particularly the most able, do not make the progress they should and do not develop their understanding at greater depth.

Since the last inspection, you have established a system for assessing pupils' learning. You and other staff have a clear picture of how well pupils are doing in each class, including those who are disadvantaged and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. You hold regular, detailed meetings to discuss pupils' learning. You and the governing body have accurately identified the areas in which the school needs to improve. Your improvement plans, however, are not sufficiently focused to help drive more rapid improvement. Leaders and governors are not as sharp as they could be in their understanding and use of information about pupils' progress from their starting points, to inform their improvement plans and to more effectively hold staff to account.

The school's website now meets the requirements for what maintained schools must publish. The governing body is aware that information about the impact of the use of the primary school physical education and sport funding and the pupil premium is not as sharp as it could be.

Since the previous inspection, there have been substantial staff changes. You provide effective, focused support for staff, including the involvement of external expertise, to support improvements to the quality of teaching. The many relevant initiatives you have introduced, or are developing, are beginning to improve pupils' attainment and progress. You are establishing a culture of increasingly high expectations of what pupils can achieve. However, leaders have not ensured that their initiatives for improving standards have been consistently applied by all staff.

Pupils are proud of their school. Leaders and other staff have ensured there is an ethos of mutual respect. Pupils behave and conduct themselves well at all times of the school day. Teachers teach pupils to be reflective, polite and caring. I observed older pupils supporting younger pupils on the playground. One older pupil, for example, kindly helped a younger pupil by patiently untying a knot in a skipping rope. One pupil told me, 'If you're lonely or upset, someone will come and help you.' Pupils understand the importance of respecting others. Some pupils I spoke with, however, are not as confident in their understanding of British values as they should be for their age.

Parents and carers with whom I spoke were happy in all respects. Many commented on the school's caring, nurturing, 'family' environment and the approachability of teachers.

Many commented on how staff helped their children to grow in confidence. Some of the small number of parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, however, were less positive about the school, including in relation to children's safety. I found no evidence to support this.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

There is a strong culture of safeguarding. Pupils spoke with confidence about how the school teaches them to keep themselves safe, for example when online or in relation to road safety. Pupils say teachers respond to any concerns they have and bullying is rare.

Leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. The school's record of recruitment checks and its recruitment processes are thorough. Leaders take timely action when they have any concerns about pupils' well-being. Records are detailed. Staff receive relevant and up-to-date training, including training in understanding their responsibilities in relation to the government's 'Prevent' duty.

### **Inspection findings**

- Recently introduced initiatives to improve standards in writing and mathematics are beginning to have a positive impact. However, this is not consistent. Pupils' work shows that, overall, not enough pupils, including the most able and those who are disadvantaged, are making good progress in writing and mathematics.
- Our scrutiny of pupils' writing showed that pupils often show perseverance in their work. In the early years and key stage 1, pupils often apply their phonics skills well to spell unfamiliar words. In some classes, teachers are rigorous in ensuring that pupils know how to edit and improve their work. However, we also identified that there are some inconsistencies. Too often, teachers are not rigorous enough in expecting pupils to use accurate spelling, grammar and punctuation in their writing, appropriate to their abilities. This sometimes reduces the quality of pupils' work and the progress they make. We also saw that, sometimes, the quality of pupils' writing is not as high in other subjects as it is in their English books.
- Pupils' work shows that teachers are using a 'mastery' approach to teaching mathematics. Teachers are often effective in using visual imagery and physical apparatus to help pupils understand mathematical concepts. Some teachers are effective in teaching pupils to use reasoning and problem-solving skills. However, again this is not consistent. Sometimes, teachers do not match the level of challenge as accurately as they could to pupils' abilities.
- Teachers do not consistently ensure that pupils to take pride and care in the presentation and quality of their work across different subjects.
- The minutes of the meetings of the governing body show that it challenges leaders about aspects of the school's work. However, governors do not ask challenging enough questions about the progress of different groups of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged.
- An additional line of enquiry I explored with you was the progress children make from the early years, through key stage 1 and into key stage 2. In 2017, pupils' attainment at the end of key stage 1 was below the national averages for reading

and, in particular, writing and mathematics. There is evidence that standards are improving. Too many pupils, however, do not make the progress that they should.

- A further line of enquiry was attendance, including that of pupils who are disadvantaged and those who have SEN and/or disabilities. Attendance is below the national average. A small number of pupils with high persistent absence affect overall figures. You explained the wide range of effective actions you take to emphasise to parents the importance of attendance. You work closely with families whose children have high persistent absence.
- Where teaching is stronger, teachers use secure subject knowledge to ask pupils questions to check their understanding and develop their thinking.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- their plans for improvement are more sharply focused to more effectively hold leaders and staff to account
- teachers consistently teach pupils to use accurate spelling, punctuation and grammar in their writing, appropriate to pupils' abilities, in all subjects
- all teachers have equally high expectations for the quality and presentation of pupils' work in all subjects
- teachers use information about pupils' learning more effectively to accurately match work to their abilities
- teachers consistently teach the skills pupils need to improve their reasoning skills and be effective problem solvers in 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 Lincolnshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

John Lawson  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I scrutinised a variety of documents relating to safeguarding; behaviour; the quality of teaching, learning and assessment; pupils' attainment and progress; staff performance; and the school's self-evaluation document and its plans for improvement. I assessed the impact on standards of the actions that leaders' have taken since the last inspection, as well as additional lines of enquiry. I looked at the range and quality of information provided on the school's website. I considered the 12

responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, as well as seven parental comments made through the Ofsted free-text service.

I met with you and three governors, including the chair of the governing body, and I spoke with parents at the beginning of the day. I met with pupils informally during the school day, as well as a meeting with a group of pupils. Together, you and I observed teaching and learning in all classes. During these visits, I looked at pupils' work and spoke with pupils to evaluate the quality of their learning. I also examined, with you, pupils' work in a sample of their books.