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Mrs Jane Palmer-Coole
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Dear Mrs Jane Palmer-Coole

Short inspection of Walton Holymoorside Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 15 May 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 January 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have built a hardworking, dedicated and confident team who are all striving together to further develop the school. Staff report that they feel well supported and are proud to work at Walton Holymoorside Primary School.

You have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and leaders and governors are now taking appropriate action to bring about the necessary improvements.

Staff consistently model cooperation, calmness, good manners and positivity to pupils. Consequently, teacher-pupil relationships are strong and pupils report that they feel well cared for and supported by both teachers and teaching assistants in school.

Pupils are happy and enjoy coming to school. This is reflected in their good attendance, which is consistently above the national average. They recognise that their teachers want them to do well and are keen to meet teachers' expectations. Pupils are confident, friendly and respectful to one another. They collaborate well and display excellent conduct around the school.

During the inspection, pupils were keen to talk about their experiences at school. They report that teachers try to make lessons fun and appreciate the

range of after-school clubs and trips that are organised for them to enrich their learning. For example, some older key stage 2 pupils spoke enthusiastically about how a recent Victorian school day and visit to a Victorian workhouse in Southwell had 'made [their] learning so much fun'.

Teachers promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Pupils understand diversity; they learn about different religions and recognise that others have beliefs that differ from their own.

Parents appreciate the welcoming atmosphere, good leadership and community spirit of the school. One parent spoke about how staff 'regularly go the extra mile to make sure pupils are happy'. Some parents said they would like more information about what their children are studying in school. One parent commented, 'It is hard to support your child when you do not know what they are learning about in school'.

The governing body performs its strategic role effectively, holding you to account while challenging and offering support as appropriate. Governors have a good knowledge of the school's development priorities and are updated regularly on how the work of the school is meeting these priorities.

The last inspection identified the need to ensure that work given to pupils was not too easy for them. Leaders have shared with staff high expectations of what all pupils, including the most able, are able to achieve. Pupils are now being given work that is more challenging. However, this needs to be sustained over time to ensure that a greater proportion of your pupils achieve at greater depth at the end of key stage 2.

You have promoted a 'growth mind-set' culture to help foster pupils' independence. Pupils report that this work has helped them to develop their skills of perseverance and to maintain positive attitudes to learning when tasks appear difficult. Pupils say that they are provided with sufficient challenge and supported well. They appreciate the 'think pink' challenge tasks that teachers provide in their feedback.

You have introduced a new system for target-setting which has raised expectations of pupils' achievement. This, alongside robust assessment of pupils' work, has strengthened the existing termly pupil progress meetings. During these meetings, you discuss individual pupils' progress and agree actions to ensure that pupils are appropriately challenged and supported.

You have raised the profile of subject leaders who are involved in monitoring activities, including work scrutiny, learning walks and data analysis. The mathematics and English leaders understand what they need to do to bring about further improvement. From their monitoring activities, they have produced action plans to address relevant areas. Subject leaders have been proactive in staff development. For example, they have used staff meetings to upskill staff, ensuring that teachers and teaching assistants have a good

understanding of the age-related expectations for each year group.

The school's data and work in pupils' books indicate that pupils are making more rapid progress as a result of this greater focus and culture of accountability. My scrutiny of books showed that there are inconsistencies in teachers' expectations of the presentation of pupils' work between key stage 2 classes. Information was made available to me indicating that leaders have started to address this issue.

The last inspection also highlighted the need for pupils to use computers more often. In addition to specific computer lessons, pupils use tablets and laptops to support their learning across the curriculum. Pupils spoke about how they use computers to research topics they are learning about. Some Year 6 pupils have also used computers to add interest to their writing, adding sound effects to their word-processed stories. Many pupils use computer programs to practise and improve their spelling. Plans for computing (and some other areas of the curriculum) are not shared with parents on the school website, limiting opportunities to allow parents to better support their children's learning at home.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Systems are simple and clear. Staff have received up-to-date training and understand their responsibilities. Leaders involve external agencies when necessary and follow up referrals when they have concerns. Records are detailed and of high quality.

Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe. They know who they can speak with, at school, if they have concerns. They say that bullying is rare but are confident that staff would deal with any instances that occurred. Governors receive the necessary training including, for example, in safer recruitment and in the 'Prevent' duty. A safeguarding link governor undertakes checks of the school's safeguarding records.

Inspection findings

- Leaders are aware that the rates of progress and attainment at the higher standards in mathematics at key stage 2 have been a weakness. You have put strategies in place to help remedy this and your current data indicates that this is starting to have a positive impact on pupils' progress.
- You have introduced a new mastery approach to the teaching of mathematics with a greater emphasis on reasoning and problem-solving to help develop pupils' deep-thinking skills. Pupils say they receive challenging work and this was reinforced by what I saw during the inspection. For example, I observed a group of Year 6 pupils tackling some difficult problems that involved constructing parallelograms with various prescribed angles and side lengths.
- The mathematics subject leader has introduced a new planning tool which,

accompanied by termly summative assessment tests, has led to a tighter focus on tracking pupils' progress and in providing the necessary interventions for those falling behind.

- You agreed with me that not enough pupils make rapid progress and attain at the higher levels in English grammar, punctuation and spelling at the end of key stage 2.
- Leaders have made changes to address this weakness. Grammar receives a sharper focus and discrete lessons are now taught in key stage 2. This is in addition to regular focused short inputs pupils receive during the week. Pupils I spoke with confirmed that teachers' expectations are high and that they expect to see grammar rules consistently embedded in their free writing. You have purchased a new published grammar scheme to help provide a structure and to help ensure thorough coverage. Information available in school during the inspection indicated that end-of-key-stage-2 pupils are on track to do much better this year.
- Leaders have also addressed the last two years' weaker-than-national-average spelling results at the end of key stage 2. It is hoped that this in turn will impact positively on results in English.
- You have introduced a new approach to the teaching of spelling in key stage 2. Pupils now spend much more time investigating word family patterns and roots rather than learning lists of spellings. Pupils use their spelling journals to write notes, practise their misspellings and to make up mnemonics to help them remember difficult spellings.
- You formally assess pupils' spellings against age-related expectations at points during the year and any pupils who are below receive spelling intervention work. You use computer-spelling programs to support pupils' spelling and handwriting lessons are linked closely to the spellings pupils need to know.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- strategies to accelerate progress in key stage 2 are further developed and embedded so that a greater proportion of pupils are working at greater depth in writing, mathematics and English grammar, punctuation and spelling by the end of key stage 2.

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

Yours sincerely

John Savage
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with pupils, staff and governors. I also spoke with a representative from the local authority. I had frequent meetings with you and your deputy and we visited classrooms together to observe teaching. I looked at pupils' work in a range of subjects and year groups. I considered 115 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, 109 free-text responses from parents and 19 responses from staff. I also spoke with parents at the start of the school day. I scrutinised a range of school documents, including records relating to safeguarding, behaviour and policies. I also looked at information published on the school website.