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Mrs Lucy Young
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Dear Mrs Young

Short inspection of Wolvercote Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 25 September 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in December 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Prior to your appointment as head of school in 2016, the school had been through a period of instability and standards had declined. Your strong leadership has led to improvements in the quality of teaching, pupils' outcomes and behaviour. You have reinvigorated the school, improved morale and gained the support of staff, parents and carers. You are well supported by other leaders, governors and the multi-academy trust (MAT). Together, you form an effective leadership team. Governors and the MAT provide strong leadership, challenge and support for the school. You are also ambitious for further improvement. You know the school's strengths and where further development is needed. Your well-judged plans identify the right priorities to continue the school's journey of improvement.

Children in the early years get off to a great start and achieve well. The environment is stimulating, teaching is strong, and relationships are nurturing. The proportion of children who achieve a 'good level of development', the Department for Education's performance measure, is now well above the national average. Pupils' outcomes in key stages 1 and 2 have also improved, particularly in mathematics in key stage 1. The 2018 unvalidated outcomes for the end of key stage 2 are above the provisional national averages for both reading and mathematics. In addition, a greater proportion of pupils attained the higher standards in these subjects than the national average. However, in key stages 1 and 2, pupils' attainment in writing was not as strong and the proportion of pupils

who attained greater depth was below average. You also recognise that disadvantaged pupils did not attain as well as other pupils in 2018.

Across the school, relationships between staff and pupils are positive and warm. Pupils enjoy coming to school and say their teachers make learning fun. The learning environment is purposeful, settled and pupils behave well. Any incidents of inappropriate behaviour are followed up promptly and diligently by staff. Your work to improve pupils' engagement and understanding of how to be successful learners is having a significant impact. Pupils recognise that, to be successful, they need to work hard and not give up when they find tasks difficult. One pupil explained, 'Being challenged helps you to learn.' The school's partnership with parents is a strength. Parents are pleased with the school and the improvements made by current leadership. As one parent commented, 'The new head of school has made a good school even better.'

Prior to joining the River Learning Trust, the school was inspected in 2012. As well as recognising the school's many strengths, inspectors asked leaders to ensure that all teaching is consistently as good as the best. Since then, there have been many changes in staff and, for a period, the quality of teaching and learning declined. In the past two years, the school has improved significantly and teaching is now securely good. Your leadership team's accurate self-evaluation and development planning set out how you are continuing to improve the school. These plans focus on the teaching of writing, the quality of pupils' writing and the attainment of disadvantaged pupils.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding at the school. The school's systematic and thorough approach ensures that any concerns about pupils are recorded carefully and followed up promptly. Records are detailed and of high quality. Leaders work in close partnership with outside agencies to ensure that, where there are concerns, pupils and their families are supported well. All staff and governors benefit from a raft of timely training and they ably fulfil their responsibilities. Governors routinely monitor safeguarding arrangements, including health and safety, and site security. Pupils feel safe and are confident that they can speak to an adult if they have any concerns. They are knowledgeable about how to keep safe when using the internet and are well informed about other aspects of safety, such as road safety. The vast majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, agree that their children feel safe at school.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection, we agreed to focus on specific aspects of the school's work, including: safeguarding; how leaders are using additional funding to improve disadvantaged pupils' attainment; pupils' writing in key stages 1 and 2; and the curriculum.
- Under the strong leadership of the assistant headteacher, the school's work to support disadvantaged pupils has been strengthened. Leaders are astute and

knowledgeable. They track pupils' attainment and progress carefully and have a good understanding of individuals' needs and the potential barriers to learning. Leaders use the school's additional funding wisely to provide a wide range of tailored support for disadvantaged pupils. Some pupils benefit from attending breakfast club. This enables them to have a settled start to the school day and be ready to learn. Other pupils benefit from support to improve their attendance. Additional guidance and targeted teaching in class are helping disadvantaged pupils to make similar progress to that of their peers. However, leaders acknowledge that the attainment of this group of pupils is below that of others.

- Leaders have implemented a range of appropriate strategies to improve pupils' writing. The MAT's support and challenge partner is helping leaders to improve this aspect of the school's work. Together, they have revised the school's English curriculum and approach to teaching writing. Pupils now regularly encounter and learn from a wide range of high-quality texts. In addition, teachers give more attention to pupils' acquisition and use of vocabulary.
- As a result, across the school, the proportions of pupils achieving the age-related expectations for writing are improving. Current pupils in key stages 1 and 2 are, overall, making good progress in writing. Nevertheless, leaders agree that some pupils are not making strong enough progress. Currently, too few of the most able pupils are demonstrating greater depth in their writing. When we sampled pupils' work, we agreed that teachers' expectations are not consistently high enough. In some instances, poor-quality writing had gone unchallenged and pupils' errors had not been addressed precisely or quickly enough. You have sensibly included writing as a key area for development in this year's school improvement plan.
- The curriculum is well planned to enable pupils to learn across a broad range of subjects. It prepares them well for life in modern Britain. Detailed planning sets out how pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding in each subject are developed through the school. You are building the skills of subject leaders, who keep overviews of the coverage and planning for their subjects across the school. You are also strengthening teachers' assessment practice so that you can evaluate more fully the impact of the curriculum on pupils' learning.
- Enrichment activities, and the school's outdoor learning and music provision are effectively woven into the school's curriculum plans. The religious education programme helps pupils to learn about different beliefs and customs. Pupils learn about the similarities and differences between religions, for example places of worship and different gods. The curriculum and the well-planned programme of assemblies help pupils to develop a good understanding of important values, such as kindness and respect. Pupils speak confidently about these values and appreciate that they guide their behaviour and help them to be responsible. When I met with pupils, they explained why these values are important. One pupil commented, 'The values help us to be kind and care for each other.'

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- disadvantaged pupils' outcomes are strengthened so that more attain the expected standards for their age
- teachers improve pupils' outcomes in writing and have higher expectations, particularly for the most able.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Oxfordshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Sue Cox
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

Together, we visited all classes to observe pupils' learning, talk to pupils and look at work in their books. I met with you and the executive headteacher to discuss the school's self-evaluation. I also had meetings with the assistant headteacher to discuss the school's work to support disadvantaged pupils and with the English leader and the MAT's support and challenge partner. I had a meeting with six members of the governing body, including the chair of governors, and met with a group of 16 pupils from Years 2 to 6.

I considered a wide range of the school's documents and policies, including the school's self-evaluation, the improvement plan, records of governors' visits, and the minutes of their meetings. I reviewed the school's pre-employment checks on the suitability of adults to work with pupils, alongside other safeguarding information. I considered the views of parents through the 55 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and their free-text comments. I also talked with parents at the start of the school day. I took into account the 33 responses to Ofsted's confidential staff survey.