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Ms Amelia Whitehouse
Headteacher
Whipperley Infant Academy
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Dear Ms Whitehouse

Short inspection of Whipperley Infant Academy

Following my visit to the school on 2 October 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.

This school continues to be good.

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

Whipperley Infant Academy provides a happy and safe place to learn. You are passionate about your school's place in the community and parents appreciate your team's work. One parent said, 'The school's support has had a massive, positive impact on my family.' You and your leaders are dedicated to do whatever it takes for the sake of those in your care.

Pupils behave well during lessons and in their play. They work well together and look after each other. Pupils demonstrate positive social skills that are taught from the moment they start in the early years. Pupils respond well to the consistently high expectations of adults, showing respect to adults and each other. They are proud of their school, with many describing it as 'epic' and 'awesome'.

You have addressed the area for improvement and eradicated the inconsistencies that were seen in the early years at the time of the previous inspection. Children, in early years, now have access to an extensive indoor and outdoor learning environment which is well resourced. Adults use these environments skilfully and creatively. I saw children exploring and developing their understanding of the world, mathematics, physical skills and social skills in the outdoor sandpit. Equally, indoors, adults provide children with a range of activities to develop their writing skills. Children are developing their early writing skills well.

You have also ensured that pupils in key stage 1, including the most able, are offered challenges in their work to promote better progress.

As leaders, you use a secure range of evidence to inform your evaluations of the school's performance. You make effective use of external advisers, including those from the local authority, and of leaders from other schools. As a result, you have an accurate view of the strengths of the school and you have identified appropriate priorities for continued school improvement.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders at all levels, including governors, have ensured that there is a secure culture of safeguarding, which guarantees that pupils are as safe and as well cared for as possible. You put in place thorough and necessary support for pupils and adults who need it and hold other agencies to account when required. Staff are vigilant and know what to do if they have a concern about a pupil's welfare. All safeguarding arrangements and records are well maintained and are fit for purpose.

Pupils say that they feel safe and they demonstrate that they know how to stay safe even when they have just started school. An early years child told one of her classmates, 'You have to say stop if you don't like it.' They know that they can go to any member of staff if they are worried although many told me that they have never needed to do so. Adults send resources, such as e-safety bags, home regularly and pupils are invited to become digital leaders. These practices have enhanced pupils' safety when they are online.

Pupils' attendance is slightly below that seen nationally but it has improved over time. Families are offered support with breakfast club, transport to school and other interventions to make sure pupils attend school regularly. Your support for families in your community is valued by parents. All parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents, expressed positive views about the care their children receive. One wrote, 'My child and I feel heard, safe and supported.'

Inspection findings

- To check whether the school remains good, I followed a few key lines of enquiry. For my first line of enquiry, I focused on how effectively leaders ensure that pupils, especially boys and those who are disadvantaged, achieve well in writing. This was because groups of pupils did not perform as well as their peers in Year 2 in 2017, nor in 2018, according to provisional data.
- Pupils develop their writing skills from mark-making in the early years to forming letter shapes and words by the start of Year 1. Many pupils write at age-related expectations by the time they leave Year 2.
- You promote pupils' development of their speaking and listening, appropriate use of language and correct letter formation skills so that they gain better writing skills. Staff demonstrate the use of phonics correctly and are improving pupils' spelling. Pupils are now making strong progress in writing from their starting

points, including boys and those who are disadvantaged.

- However, at times pupils wait when they have finished a task until an adult is available to guide them with what to do next. This slows the progress that pupils make when this happens. You agree that developing pupils' independence skills remains an area to improve further.
- In the early years, adults provide high-quality language development. Children have an increasingly secure range of vocabulary to use in their writing. Consequently, last academic year children's progress in early years was very evident in the 'Great Whipperley Write-Off'.
- For my second line of enquiry, I investigated how effectively leaders have continued improving pupils' outcomes in mathematics. Pupils' outcomes increased in 2017. I wanted to check that this improvement has continued. In 2018, the proportion of Year 2 pupils achieving expected standards in mathematics declined slightly from the previous year. However, it remained broadly in line with the national average.
- Mathematics is well resourced, and staff are well trained. Staff use correct vocabulary to develop pupils' learning effectively. Pupils make progress across the key stage and can explain their learning well. They find word problems more challenging than straightforward calculations. Lower-ability pupils are given support that enables them to reach the same outcomes as their peers in most cases. Pupils who have prior gaps in their education are supported to help them catch up as much as possible.
- You have firm plans to refresh staff training this term so there is greater consistency. You are providing further training so adults support pupils' mathematical learning and know how best to address pupils' mistakes in their work.
- Where you have identified the best practice, staff offer pupils clear guidance on how to improve their learning and the quality of practical support from other adults in the classroom is appropriate to meets the needs of pupils. However, as with writing tasks, in some mathematics lessons, pupils wait to be told to move on to the next activity. In some classes pupils have become too reliant on adult involvement. This reduces their opportunities to make progress and grow in independence in their learning.
- My final line of enquiry was to check how well leaders enable pupils to develop their knowledge and skills across the wider curriculum. This was because there was no breakdown of curriculum information for each year group on the school's website to tell parents how each subject is taught over the year.
- During the inspection, I saw evidence that pupils experience all areas of the national curriculum. Some subjects, such as science and art, have been priorities for school leaders and these are very well taught. In science and art pupils have opportunities to explore and extend their learning.
- Pupils are encouraged to continue their learning at home. Families enjoyed the 'Gruffalo – Walk in the Woods' and all pupils are given the chance to become 'nature detectives'.

- Music and other performing arts are not taught as well as other subjects. Pupils do not regularly use musical instruments or have the opportunity to perform to deepen their knowledge and understanding of music and rhythm. They do not routinely learn about music or dance, although pupils have some access to studying these subjects through the year. We agreed this is an area to improve.
- Currently, your curriculum planning does not set out well enough how every subject will develop throughout each year group. You do not currently communicate this to parents and governors as effectively as you should. There is less of a strategic overview for governors when they visit the school, so they can hold leaders more fully for account for the quality of education pupils receive.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers provide more opportunities for pupils to develop their knowledge and skills independently, so that pupils have the confidence to move on to the next challenge as soon as they are ready, without waiting for adult support
- they improve curriculum planning so that it makes clear in each subject how pupils will progress through each year group, and communicate this clearly to parents and governors
- they improve provision for subjects such as music and the performing arts.

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

Yours sincerely

Paula Masters
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

We discussed the lines of enquiry for this inspection, the school's internal evaluation of its performance, plans for future development and information about the progress and attainment of current pupils.

Meetings were held with you, other leaders on and representatives of the governing body, including the chair of the governing body. I spoke with a representative of the local authority.

I scrutinised evidence to evaluate the quality of teaching, learning and assessment over time. I visited the early years base, and other classes with you or your senior

leaders. I evaluated samples of pupils' work and spoke with six pupils about their learning and well-being. I also spoke with pupils and staff informally in lessons, around school and at playtime.

I examined policies and procedures for the safeguarding of pupils, including mandatory checks made for the safer recruitment of staff. We discussed the school's records of behaviour. I held discussions with you and other staff about safeguarding and attendance.

The views of 20 parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, were considered. I also took account of the views of 31 staff and 28 pupils who completed their online surveys during the inspection.