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Mrs Melanie Gaskin
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Gaskin

Short inspection of Westlands Community Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 11 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 December 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in specific areas. This may indicate that the school has improved significantly overall. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection will be a section 5 inspection.

Your school is welcoming and inclusive. Your pupils feel valued and are rightly proud of their school. You and your senior leaders ensure that the learning environment is vibrant and celebratory. Pupils enjoy a rich and broad curriculum where they experience many engaging activities that deepen their understanding of the world around them. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary; they are polite and friendly towards each other and to the adults who work with them. They listen carefully in their lessons and try hard to do their best. Pupils are confident and articulate. They talk positively about their time in school and the activities they enjoy most, such as English lessons, trips and art. Your kind, caring and happy pupils are a credit to the school and the community.

Since the previous inspection, Westlands School has been through a period of instability; there has been a succession of acting and temporary headteachers. While much of the teaching remained strong during that time, there were weaknesses in leadership. You have carefully developed a strong leadership team which shares your vision for the school and is committed to its continued improvement. You and your team are uncompromising in your drive to raise

standards across the school. You check performance carefully, and support teachers and leaders in ensuring that staff are properly trained to deliver the improvements that you know to be necessary. A striking feature of your school is the quality of your leadership team and its high expectations and commitment to raising standards for all pupils in all areas of the curriculum. As a result, your teachers and support staff are effective and reflective practitioners, who are improving outcomes for your pupils.

Your school's culture promotes respect for all members of its diverse community. Parents and carers are positive about the school. They praise the curriculum and the ability of the school's staff, who they recognise as approachable, friendly and responsive to concerns. They comment positively on the quality of nurture and support that you offer children and families. Parents recognise the recent changes to the school's organisation and learning environment as positive. Most parents and pupils would rightly recommend the school to others.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your team have made sure that all of the school's staff understand their responsibilities regarding safeguarding. They are vigilant and proactive. Your record-keeping is careful and detailed. Governors check that safeguarding procedures are rigorously implemented. Recruitment processes are secure, and all statutory requirements are met.

Your learning mentors are instrumental in providing high-quality social care, which has been rightly recognised by the local authority. You provide excellent support for vulnerable children; you follow up if you believe their needs are not being met and work closely with other agencies to ensure that your interventions result in good outcomes.

Your pupils feel safe in school. The premises are maintained as a secure environment, and pupils are appropriately supervised at all times. Parents and pupils say that bullying is rare and that teachers respond rapidly and sensitively to problems when they arise. Pupils have a good understanding of issues such as online safety and the importance of mutual respect.

Inspection findings

- Your school has a relatively high proportion of disadvantaged pupils. Therefore, I wanted to review the provision you make for them. Published information indicates that they attain well, and most make exceptional progress with their learning. I wanted to explore why this was. You spend additional funds well to ensure that these pupils receive the right kind of academic support to enable them to flourish, both socially and with their learning. You also use a range of strategies that pay attention to this group's sense of well-being, which is another aspect of your nurturing ethos in action.
- You keep thorough records on the progress of all your disadvantaged pupils, which means that you and your staff have a good understanding of their needs

and the progress they are making. You have focused sharply on the performance of this group of pupils and you ask teachers to take more responsibility for their outcomes.

- I also looked at the school's provision for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. I wanted to test what it was like for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities in Westlands. In fact, last year, you had identified special educational needs provision as a weakness and reorganised this aspect of the school's work.
- Your new special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) has been in post for only a short period of time but has been highly effective in driving the changes this provision required. She has held meetings with parents and external specialists, and she is also working with staff to plan more specific and targeted support work. There is an acknowledgement that expectations for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities had not been sufficiently high. This is no longer the case, as the SENCo has established clear expectations with a set of 'non-negotiable' standards. This improvement work is at an early stage, but it is being ably driven by a committed leader and is fully supported by you and your governors. However, the practice is not securely embedded.
- I wanted to check provision in the early years and key stage 1 so that I could be sure that these pupils were being taught effectively and making good progress. Your on-entry assessments indicate that children start Reception Year at a low level, but they are well supported and make increasingly good progress with their learning.
- The teaching of phonics in key stage 1 and in the early years is a growing strength. A new approach to phonics, linking sounds to writing, was introduced in the summer term. This work had the immediate impact of improving Reception children's writing. These children are now in Year 1, writing with independence and confidence. Pupils' progress in phonics is regularly checked so that teachers can be sure that work given to them is at the right level.
- The school's previous inspection identified writing as an area that required improvement. You were successful last year in narrowing the attainment gap between reading and writing, with more pupils reaching the expected standard in writing. Strong subject leadership has played an important role in improvements in this subject.
- Staff training for writing has been thorough, and strong links have been made between regular reading and an increased capacity to succeed in writing. Importantly, expectations have been raised. Pupils enjoy their writing lessons and the level of challenge is an important factor in this. From the early years upwards, pupils are encouraged to write. They are given plenty of opportunities to do so across the whole curriculum, using a range of different text types. Older pupils comment positively on their learning and are able to redraft their work with accurate punctuation and effective vocabulary. Work in pupils' books clearly demonstrates good and, in several instances, outstanding progress.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- leaders fully embed high-quality provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities to ensure they make as much progress as other pupils.

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

Yours sincerely

James Richards
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

My inspection activities included meetings with curriculum subject leaders, members of staff with responsibility for safeguarding and two governors. I carried out learning walks with senior leaders in the foundation stage, key stage 1 and key stage 2, briefly visiting eight classes. I looked in depth at pupils' English books and listened to pupils read aloud their writing.

During the inspection, I looked at a range of the school's documents. These included leaders' evaluation of the school; documentation relating to assessment; the special educational needs provision; behaviour and attendance records; and the arrangements for safeguarding. I spoke with parents on the playground and held a meeting with a group of pupils. The 82 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, were considered, as well as the 42 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and the 123 responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire.