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Mr Shaun Nicholls  
Headteacher  
Widey Court Primary School  
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Dear Mr Nicholls

### **Short inspection of Widey Court Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 14 May 2019, 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 predecessor school was judged to be good in September 2012. The school joined Connect Academy Trust in September 2016.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

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

You and your senior leaders, including governors, have established a clear vision and collective commitment to continue to improve Widey Court. The determination to ensure that pupils achieve the best possible outcomes permeates the school.

Widey Court is a happy and welcoming community. Staff have built warm and caring relationships that enable pupils to flourish and be happy at school. An example of this is the breakfast club, where laughter reverberates throughout the dining hall and where pupils are always smiling. Pupils are polite and respectful to each other and staff.

The vast majority of parents and carers are very supportive of the school, your leadership and the teaching pupils receive. In my discussion with a small group of parents, one parent, encapsulating the views of many, commented, 'The staff at Widey Court cannot do enough for you.'

Over the last two years, the teaching staff profile has changed considerably. Nevertheless, you steered the school through this challenging period effectively and have now established a united workforce. Staff morale is high. You accurately identified and prioritised appropriate areas for improvement and, with support from

the trust, invested heavily in the professional development of staff. They value the opportunities that have been provided to them. The impact upon pupils' outcomes is clear to see.

You have ensured that the curriculum is broad and balanced and that pupils' cultural development is strongly supported. During the inspection, pupils in Year 6 were keen to share how the curriculum developed their knowledge and understanding of British history through their topic of 'Kings and Queens'. Pupils were able to recall key events of the monarchy and how they shaped modern Britain. Pupils also enjoy the additional responsibilities they are charged with, such as being house captains, and feel that peer mediators have had a positive impact upon social times.

Governance is effective and makes a strong contribution to the school. Governors are proud of and passionate about the school and are routinely involved in school life. During the inspection, staff told me how they appreciate the personal letters that governors send to acknowledge when they have gone above and beyond the call of duty. Governors and the trust provide appropriate support and challenge in equal balance. They regularly monitor leaders' work and know the strengths and weaknesses of the school well.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You and your staff have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. All staff and governors have regular up-to-date training in child protection to ensure that they can identify any pupils at risk. During the inspection, I checked staff's knowledge of female genital mutilation, child sexual exploitation, radicalisation and neglect. Staff are vigilant and know what to do if they have any concerns. The monitoring of vulnerable pupils' welfare is comprehensive through the systems and pastoral care you provide. Your safeguarding governor monitors all areas of safeguarding thoroughly. The trust provides further checks to ensure the validity of governors' work.

Pupils who spoke with me say they feel safe in school. This view is supported by nearly all pupils who responded to the pupil survey. During the inspection, pupils could articulate clearly what they must do to stay safe online or if they did not feel safe. They also report that bullying is rare. This was echoed by the very large majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's survey, Parent View.

### **Inspection findings**

- At the start of the inspection, we agreed on some lines of enquiry. My first focus was the progress being made in mathematics by disadvantaged pupils and pupils with average starting points. This is because, in 2018, these pupils made less progress than other pupils nationally. Leaders have rightly identified mathematics as an area of priority for this year. You have adapted the curriculum to ensure that it provides sufficient breadth and depth so that pupils can develop their knowledge and skills across a range of mathematical strands.

- Pupils' workbooks show that regular problem-solving activities are built into daily lessons. Pupils successfully apply their knowledge of calculation and number operations to solve complex problems. However, good levels of challenge are not set for pupils of all abilities, particularly for pupils with low starting points. Where activities are too easy, pupils lose focus on their learning. Furthermore, some activities required pupils to spend significant amounts of time to organise for themselves. As a result, too much lesson time is wasted. This hampers pupils' progress and inhibits them from reaching their full potential.
- My second line of enquiry focused on disadvantaged pupils' progress in English across key stage 2. This is because disadvantaged pupils do not make as much progress as other pupils. The leader responsible for disadvantaged pupils is new to her role. Nevertheless, she gained effective support from the trust and has a good strategic oversight of disadvantaged pupils. Leaders have implemented a range of strategies to improve the progress of disadvantaged pupils. These strategies and the targets for improvements are systematically monitored to ensure that pupils are overcoming any barriers to learning.
- Leaders and staff have made recent changes to the way writing is taught. The teaching of current disadvantaged pupils' writing in nearly all classes is strong. Themes for writing engage pupils in thinking carefully about the audience and the purpose they are writing for. In Year 6, for example, pupils used their visit to the Tamar Bridge as a stimulus to write about Charles Darwin. Pupils told me that this helps bring their learning alive. Work in pupils' books shows that pupils have strong composition skills that have developed over time. As a result, in nearly all classes, current disadvantaged pupils are making strong progress. However, during the learning we observed together, we noted that the most able pupils were not being challenged sufficiently. The work set was sometimes too easy. Consequently, pupils started to 'switch off' from their learning and were not able to manage their distractions.
- At the start of 2018, you and your leaders recognised that disadvantaged pupils' progress in reading required attention. Leaders responded with a comprehensive action plan. Interventions are tailored to individual pupils and texts are matched to personal interests. When listening to pupils read, the impact of the action plan and intervention is clear. The majority of pupils have made strong progress from their starting points. Most pupils read with sufficient fluency for what would be expected for their age and have developed well the skills to tackle unfamiliar words. Pupils are able to answer comprehension questions on their text, using established reading skills such as inference. Pupils report positively on the changes that have been made in the approach to the teaching of reading.
- My final line of enquiry focused on the progress pupils are making in writing from low starting points across key stage 2. A review of pupils' books, alongside learning we observed together, indicates that writing is improving rapidly. Pupils are provided with opportunities to develop their skills further in other subjects, such as humanities, and this is helping pupils to refine their skills. In some of the work we reviewed, the quality of improvement over time was remarkably strong.

## **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- disadvantaged pupils make more consistent progress in mathematics and writing so they achieve better by the end of key stage 2
- the quality of teaching improves further by providing activities that challenge all pupils and maintain their focus.

I am copying this letter to chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of Connect Academy Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Plymouth. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Matt Middlemore  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, senior and middle leaders, and five members of the local governing body, including the chief executive officer. I considered the 103 responses to Parent View, including the free-text comments. I spoke with pupils formally and informally during the day. I also considered the 29 responses to the staff survey and 71 responses to the pupil survey. Along with senior leaders, I observed teaching and learning and I listened to a sample of pupils read. Together, we looked at a range of pupils' work in exercise books. I scrutinised a range of school documentation, including the single central record, your school self-evaluation and the improvement plan.