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Dear Mrs Evans

Short inspection of Warley Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 14 September 2017, 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 July 2013.

This school continues to be good.

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

Following your appointment as headteacher in September 2015, you very quickly identified key areas to ensure that the school continues to improve. These included improving outcomes in mathematics at the end of key stage 2 and ensuring that a higher proportion of pupils achieve greater depth in writing at the end of this key stage.

The leadership capacity of the school has increased through a new leadership structure. Leaders, staff and governors work together effectively as a team. Safeguarding systems and procedures have been strengthened and leaders have revised the curriculum and implemented new approaches to assessment, marking and feedback. You are highly appreciative of the valuable support you received from the local authority and the Brentwood Collaborative Partnership following your appointment as headteacher.

Governors have strengthened their roles since your appointment, having also benefited from local authority support. They hold the school to account for all aspects of performance, including the spending of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. As a result, attainment and progress across the school are rising.

Outcomes at all stages improved in 2017, other than results in mathematics, which dipped slightly at the end of key stage 2.

Warley Primary School is warm, caring and highly inclusive. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is higher than that seen nationally. There are a number of children with education, health and care plans who have high needs and who are very well supported and integrated. Parents speak highly of your support and approachability. They appreciate the fact that you and your leadership team are highly visible and readily available. Many parents also commented on improvements since your appointment. They are also very appreciative of the before- and after-school clubs. One commented: 'Warley Primary School is a fantastic school with a fabulous community feel. It is a small school that is incredibly well led. As a parent, I always feel that I can have contact with my children's teachers, should I need to.' Another parent said, 'an amazing school, the teachers and head go above and beyond for the children'.

Pupils are confident and proud of the school. Their conduct is exemplary at all times. In lessons, they pay close attention to teachers and respond eagerly to their questions. They get on promptly with their learning activities and collaborate very well. Pupils enjoy their learning because the curriculum provides many interesting topics and they share the school ethos of 'above and beyond'. Pupils appreciate their teachers. One commented, 'they are great teachers', and another said, 'all lessons are fun'.

Leaders have worked successfully to bring about and maintain improvements since the previous inspection. Staff have benefited from effective training opportunities linked to school development priorities. For example, you made developing pupils' writing a whole-school priority, together with improving pupils' calculation skills. Those staff who responded to Ofsted's online survey say that they are proud to be a part of the school, feel valued and appreciate the professional support and training provided for them.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong safeguarding culture across the school. You have introduced stronger systems to ensure that all aspects of safeguarding are rigorous. Appropriate checks are made on staff and recorded as required. You ensure that all staff receive up-to-date training about different aspects of safeguarding and know what to do if they have any concerns. You have improved the system for recording such concerns so that it is clear what action is taken, when and why.

Pupils feel happy and safe at school. The curriculum teaches them how to keep safe in a variety of situations, including when using the internet. Pupils told me that bullying is very rare at school, but they are confident that adults will deal with any incidents that do happen. Parents overwhelmingly agree that their children are kept safe and are well cared for at school.

Inspection findings

- To determine whether the school remains good, one of my lines of enquiry was to look at outcomes in key areas, the first of which was in writing. In 2016, the proportion of pupils who achieved the expected standard in writing at the end of Year 6 was below that seen for reading and mathematics and below that seen nationally. No pupils achieved greater depth in their writing at the end of key stage 2 in 2016. The progress that pupils made in writing from the end of key stage 1 was less strong than the progress they made in reading and mathematics and was in the lowest 10% compared to that seen nationally.
- The most recent Year 6 unvalidated data for 2017 indicates that pupils in Year 6 achieved well in writing and a higher proportion reached greater depth than in 2016. This is supported by their work in books and shows that the school's new approach, which is focused on improving spelling and broadening pupils' vocabulary, is proving to be effective in raising standards. Internal school tracking data shows that pupils in all years are making good progress in their writing. Nonetheless, you recognise that there is still work to be done to further increase the proportion of pupils who achieve greater depth in writing.
- I wanted to see whether the upward trend in outcomes at the end of the early years had been continued. I was pleased to see that this was indeed the case. Outcomes in 2017 have risen further and are above those seen nationally in 2016. This represents good progress for children from often low starting points. Together, we observed the new Reception Year intake, who were remarkably happy and settled, despite a short time in school. Both indoor and outdoor learning environments are rich and provide extremely well for all areas of learning.
- I also wanted to find out if outcomes in the Year 1 phonics screening check had improved, following a dip in 2016. The proportion of children who met the expected standard has risen in 2017 and is above last year's national figure. This reflects improvements in the teaching of phonics in Year 1. Reading has a high profile across the school. All classrooms have dedicated reading areas and access to age-appropriate texts in the shared areas.
- My next focus was to determine whether all the areas for improvement identified at the time of the previous inspection have been successfully addressed. One of these was to improve pupils' progress in mathematics by providing more time to practise calculation skills. You have introduced a new calculation policy and new ways of teaching to improve pupils' calculation skills. Last year, the 2016 key stage 2 results for mathematics reflected this. A higher proportion of pupils achieved both the expected and higher standard than was seen nationally, consolidating improvements seen in 2014 and 2015.
- You are disappointed that this improvement was not reflected in the Year 6 mathematics results in 2017, but this was not unexpected. Your detailed analysis of the mathematics paper shows that most pupils in 2017 did very well in the arithmetic paper, showing strong calculation skills. The 2017 Year 6 cohort included a high proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and these pupils did not do well in the reasoning paper, although

other pupils fared better. Many pupils had also left and joined the school since the end of key stage 1. These pupils also did less well than those who had been continuously at the school since the end of key stage 1.

- We looked at the work and progress in pupils' mathematics books last year and the progress and attainment of current Year 6 pupils. This indicates that these pupils are on track to attain better in mathematics. Your internal school tracking data also indicates that this is likely to be the case.
- My final line of enquiry related to how well the needs of disadvantaged pupils are met. This is because external data for 2016 showed that this group of pupils did not make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics from their starting points at the end of key stage 1. You explained to me that, when you became headteacher, you inherited a situation where funding had not been well used and you were unable to address this until the end of the financial year. Since then, you have reviewed how the additional funding is used and also the effectiveness of interventions across the school.
- You have focused on providing good-quality teaching for all pupils in the first instance. This new approach had not had a full impact by the end of 2016. However, school tracking data, external unvalidated data for 2017 and the work we looked at in pupils' books all provide evidence that disadvantaged pupils who left the school at the end of the 2017 academic year made better progress. You provided evidence that differences in the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and non-disadvantaged pupils are diminishing. School tracking data and work in pupils' books also indicate that disadvantaged pupils across the school are currently making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- recently introduced strategies for teaching writing, including those for improving spelling and developing vocabulary, are built upon so that the improvements seen in 2017 are sustained and higher proportions of pupils attain greater depth in their writing
- plans to further improve attainment in mathematics at the end of key stage 2, by strengthening pupils' reasoning skills, are implemented swiftly to ensure that the dip seen this year is halted.

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

Joan Beale
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, your senior leadership team, all teachers and the co-chair of the governing body. I had a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority. You and I visited all classrooms together to observe teaching and learning and looked at the current work in pupils' books in a range of subjects. We also looked at pupils' workbooks from last year. I met with a group of pupils to talk about their experiences at school.

I scrutinised safeguarding policies and practice, including systems for the safe recruitment of staff. I considered a wide range of other documentation, including the school's own evaluation of its work, plans for improvement and reports to governors. I also evaluated documentation in relation to pupils' attainment and progress.

I took account of 71 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 63 comments received electronically, and spoke with 14 parents when they were bringing their children to school. I also considered a letter from one parent. I further analysed 40 responses from the pupil questionnaire and 23 responses to the staff questionnaire.