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Mr Matthew Montebello
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Montebello

Short inspection of Western Road Community Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 6 July 2016, 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 March 2012.

This school continues to be good.

You have made a considerable difference to the school since you arrived in September 2015, initially as interim headteacher. Following an unsettling period, with a number of changes of leadership and teaching staff, your calm, measured and reflective approach has brought a much-needed feeling of stability for the community. Very quickly, you have grasped a firm understanding of the school's strengths and the areas for improvement it still faces. Already, you have used this well to take successful action to ensure that the good quality of education at Western Road is sustained and built on.

Parents and staff are overwhelmingly positive. Collectively, they conveyed a strong sense of pride as they described their unified and happy school. Staff that replied to the questionnaire were unanimous in their view that the school has improved since the previous inspection. 'Everyone is pulling in the same direction', and 'We're in this together' were just two different ways of expressing the same consistent message I heard when speaking with different people.

Effective teaching means that learning points are very clear and pupils recall their prior learning readily, especially in English and mathematics. Rates of pupils' progress have shown an improving trend since the previous inspection, especially in reading and writing. Reading continues to be a significant strength, as it was at the time of the previous inspection. It is clear that the pupils are the central focus and drive of your leadership. Disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special

educational needs and/or disabilities achieve as well as their peers from their different starting points.

Pupils enjoy school and have positive attitudes to learning. Their manners are impeccable and they demonstrate high levels of respect for adults and each other. They are articulate and listen attentively to what other pupils have to say. Year 6 pupils showed a strong sense of teamwork and trust as they worked on each other's willow structures to create grass, flamingos and a giant tiger under the guidance of a visiting artist, inspired by the work of Rousseau.

One of the key recommendations from the previous inspection report was to ensure that lessons met the needs of the most able pupils to lift their achievement. Significantly more pupils than seen nationally reached the higher levels in reading and writing at the end of both key stages 1 and 2 in 2015. The same was true in mathematics at key stage 1, with the proportion matching the national average at key stage 2. Another recommendation was about the contribution of subject leaders to school improvement. When you arrived, you found out that subject leaders were still unclear about their roles. Through your guidance and some additional training, they have now begun to develop a better understanding of what their role is about and take a more active part in leading their subjects. However, you and they recognise that there is still much more to do to ensure that this work has a significant impact in securing a consistently high standard of education across all subjects.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Pupils feel safe at school and parents agree. Pupils are especially positive about the behaviour and conduct of their peers in lessons and around the school. Clear and easy to use policies and procedures strongly support you and your team to protect pupils and keep them safe. Staff training is kept up to date so they know and use the school's procedures well. Written records are detailed and show that staff take any concerns seriously, seeking advice from other professionals or agencies where necessary. Leaders take care to record the action that they have taken and what has happened as a result.

Checks on adults that come into contact with pupils are detailed, thorough and very well organised. Governors check systematically that agreed policies and procedures are followed. The designated governor has a secure knowledge and clear oversight of safeguarding procedures. Through regular and comprehensive reporting to the full governing body, she rightly takes care to ensure that safeguarding remains everyone's responsibility.

Most pupils attend regularly but you and your team keep a very close check on any pupils that are frequently absent. You monitor regularly to check that their attendance improves as a result of your actions and there are a number of clear examples where they have had a positive impact. However, some pupils are still absent too often.

Inspection findings

- Leaders' own written evaluations about the school are frank, honest and helpful. You and other leaders are ambitious to build on the school's successes with no hint of complacency.
- Plans for improvement use measurable targets and milestones effectively so that it is clear what you want to achieve. With governors, you use these well to check whether improvements are on track.
- The governing body is involved in the school's self-evaluation and development planning. Consequently, governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Dedicated, passionate and enthusiastic, governors are rightly conscious of the need to remain strategic in their support and challenge without becoming too involved in running the school directly.
- As headteacher, you identify the strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning accurately and have acted decisively on your findings, conveying uncompromisingly high standards to secure consistently good or better teaching for pupils.
- You rightly identify the contribution of teaching assistants as a strength of teaching. Teachers and teaching assistants work well together to support pupils' differing needs. Adults ask thoughtful questions to check pupils' understanding carefully.
- The early years provision provides children with secure foundations on which to build their learning and development. Many more children than is typical secure the skills they need to be prepared for the Year 1 curriculum.
- Younger children use their strong knowledge of phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) confidently to read and write. Results in the Year 1 phonics screening check rose markedly above the national average in 2015 and have remained similarly high this year.
- Teachers promote and capitalise on pupils' love of books to inspire learning, from 'Handa's surprise' in the early years to challenging texts such as 'The hound of the Baskervilles' in Year 5. Pupils enthusiastically recall books that they have read and review these in mature and sometimes sophisticated ways. Pupils who have special educational needs and or disabilities that I spoke to had similarly positive attitudes to reading.
- Younger pupils make good progress learning how to join their letters neatly and with care. The writing of some Year 1 pupils is already extremely well developed for their ages, with the most able pupils building considerable stamina to sustain good-quality narratives. Older pupils are increasingly skilled in combining their expanding vocabulary and strong understanding of grammar to organise their writing into well-constructed complex sentences.
- Pupils learn a good range of mathematics. Most-able pupils are routinely set more challenging work which makes them think about how to use and apply concepts in different ways, rather than just doing more difficult calculations. Pupils reported that they are used to being made to think hard in mathematics.
- Significantly more pupils than seen nationally reach at least the expected levels by the end of Year 6 in reading, writing and mathematics. Together with the strengths in their personal development identified at the previous

inspection, this ensures that pupils are well prepared for their secondary education.

- In the past, a significantly above-average proportion of most-able pupils have reached the higher levels in reading and writing, whereas mathematics has been broadly similar to national figures. There is much less of a marked difference for current pupils.
- Over time, the school has been very successful at closing the gap in performance between disadvantaged pupils and others in school and nationally. Never complacent, now leaders are focused on doing all that they can to close any gaps more quickly lower down the school. As numbers of these pupils are particularly low in some cohorts, a leader has very recently been charged with making sure that any support is properly personalised to meet individual pupils' needs.
- Pupils have opportunities to learn a range of subjects and topics such as carrying out investigations in science about electricity or thermal insulation. This is enhanced by other enriching experiences, such as the increasing use of land belonging to a local wildlife trust for field trips. However, you and your deputy know that you have focused particularly sharply on English and mathematics this year. You recognise that the standard of education across the range of other subjects is variable and overall of a lesser quality compared with English and mathematics.
- At the start of my visit, parents were literally queuing up to tell me how good the school is and with good reason. The range of views gathered show that parents are pleased with how happy their children are and how safe they feel. Rightly, the overwhelming majority also agree that their children are well looked after and make good progress at school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the quality of the curriculum, teaching and learning is consistently high across subjects and classes
- the proportion of pupils that are frequently absent is reduced to bring it at least in line with national levels.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the director of children's services for East Sussex. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Clive Dunn
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection I met with you, your deputy, your staff and six governors, including one of the co-chairs. I also spoke on the telephone to a representative of the local authority and met briefly with a local leader of education who has provided you with support this year. You or your deputy accompanied me as I visited all of the classes. During these visits I talked to pupils about their learning and looked at their work. I also reviewed the range of pupils' work across subjects from the sample that you provided. I spoke with a large number of parents informally at the start of the day and had informal conversations with pupils at lunchtime. I took account of 62 responses to Ofsted's online Parent View questionnaire, and analysed 41 questionnaires completed by pupils and 17 by staff. I considered all of the written comments that were added to these as well as an e-mail from a parent alongside other inspection evidence. I reviewed the school's website and sampled a range of documents and records, including some relating to safeguarding.