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Mrs Jane Woods  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Woods

### **Short inspection of Woodlands Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 24 November 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.**

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

You are relentlessly raising expectations of staff and pupils, captured in the motto 'always try your best to impress'. Driven by your high aspirations for Woodlands Primary School and your dedication, you review your plans for improvements and check the quality of teaching frequently to make sure that all pupils benefit from good teaching in all year groups. The views of staff who completed the Ofsted questionnaire, and those who spoke to me, are very positive about your leadership. They praise the way you support them. They contribute willingly to the success of your key priorities. For example, they are working very hard to improve standards in writing and mathematics.

Some of the changes you have to make do not come without challenges, such as when you have to recruit new teachers, but your high standards mean that pupils learn well. Senior and subject leaders are clear about their roles. Curriculum teams work well together to plan exciting topics so that pupils and staff really enjoy their work. The 'jungle corridor', the key stage 1 trip to the cinema and the many extra-curricular activities and clubs are examples of this. Pupils like the opportunities they have to apply their learning to real-life contexts and to show their talents. I observed pupils in Year 3 and Year 4 rehearsing for their end-of-year play. Pupils concentrated on what they had to do, sang with passion and were very proud to

perform to an audience. The staff's contribution to pupils' personal development and general well-being is a strength of the school.

Teaching and learning are good because:

- pupils are polite, attentive in lessons and ready to learn
- staff know their subjects well and willingly share effective practice
- the environment inspires pupils through many displays of their achievement
- the curriculum is interesting and relevant to pupils' needs
- parents are helped to support the school and their children's learning.

At the previous inspection, inspectors were positive about most of the teaching. However, inspectors noted that improvements were necessary in the use of the outdoor area in early years, the challenge provided for the most-able pupils and the use of assessment to raise attainment. The impact of your senior leadership team is evident:

- The quality of teaching is now mostly good.
- The teachers new to the school receive effective support to improve their skills.
- The provision for most-able pupils is well managed. These pupils do well.
- The outdoor area in the early years is much improved and used well.
- Teachers apply the school's assessment policy diligently to help pupils improve their work.

The good teaching is helping to accelerate pupils' progress. Staff in the early years give children a good start to their education. The proportion of children reaching good levels of development by the end of Reception is above average. This represents rapid progress from their generally low starting points. Outcomes in phonics are good. Across all years, reading is given a high profile and taught well. By the end of Year 6, pupils are well prepared to move on to their secondary school. Pupils are making at least the progress expected of them. This includes those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are disadvantaged. You recognised that in some areas, such as writing, progress was not always consistently good across all year groups. The creation of a designated pupil premium team is a recent development but, already, the pupils I met were very clear about the difference that it is making to their learning. They said that the additional one-to-one support was really good because it helped when the work was getting too hard. Outcomes for these pupils are improving. You are aware of the need to monitor the impact of this initiative to ensure that pupils of all abilities, and boys in particular, do as well in writing as they do in reading.

Your analysis of performance information, supplemented by the effective challenge of knowledgeable governors, enables you to take prompt action, for example to improve mathematics. A range of initiatives is ensuring that the progress of current pupils is accelerating in this subject. However, the accuracy of assessment in subjects other than English and mathematics, particularly in science, requires further work. In some subjects, expectations of what pupils can achieve, including the quality of handwriting and presentation of work, are not high enough. Governors need to have more information about progress and achievement across

the curriculum. You are making good use of external advice. Teachers act on the precise guidance of the local authority's advisers who provide good support to the school. Learning support assistants play a key role in raising standards. Their work is well targeted to support those who have gaps in their learning.

Parents like this school. They like its community and family feel. They say that you resolve any concerns promptly, that you show great leadership and know all the children by name. The pupils also confirmed this. They feel that you are highly approachable and totally dedicated to making the school even better.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The school's safeguarding policies and procedures meet requirements. You ensure that appropriate checks are made when staff are recruited to the school, that staff are regularly trained in child protection and that pupils are taught how to keep safe. The early years team is vigilant and staff are quick to spot potential safeguarding issues.

Pupils know who to turn to should any concerns arise. Pupils and parents are confident that safety is promoted well. Rules and responsibilities are clear, relationships are good. The school's policies and procedures relating to bullying are effective. Pupils said that bullying was not tolerated.

As the designated safeguarding leader, you liaise with Hertfordshire social care services effectively to protect pupils and seek the support of external agencies where necessary. Records of child protection cases are kept in good order. You follow issues rigorously, including contacting other local authorities promptly when children in receipt of social care services transfer to your school. Your expert guidance is improving pupils' welfare and well-being. Your sustained effort to communicate with families, such as to improve attendance or behaviour, is effective.

### **Inspection findings**

- You are checking that pupils' achievements are celebrated and, where needed, improved. You are successfully meeting your targets, for example to improve pupils' attendance to at least the national average. The school's comprehensive plans and accurate self-evaluation provide a good basis for improvement. Outcomes, particularly in the early years and in Year 6, are rising.
- With the support of governors, you make firm decisions when managing teachers' performance to make sure that pupils are well taught. Recruitment is a challenge in the area but you do not compromise and you seek to employ the best practitioners. Staff reflect on their teaching so as to continually improve. They work well as teams and share effective practice enthusiastically. They have positive views about working at the school.
- Teaching is good and, with the expert knowledge of your deputy headteacher, you provide detailed feedback to staff in order to improve practice even further. In monitoring the success of teaching and assessment you rightly prioritise the quality of writing and mathematics because these two subjects are central to

your improvement strategy. To make outcomes even better, other subjects, especially science, must now be similarly checked. There is also scope to raise expectations and improve the quality of pupils' work across the curriculum. Subject and curriculum team leaders support your strong strategic direction but reporting to governors in subjects other than English and mathematics is underdeveloped. As a result, governors don't know enough about the impact of their decisions on outcomes across all subjects.

- Pupils make good progress from their varied starting points. You quickly identify pupils who are not doing well enough. Spelling is reinforced through strategies such as the 'yell-to-spell' approach. Pupils who are most-able, including the most able pupils who are disadvantaged, receive well-targeted support. They explain how the progression train (build-develop-apply-master-succeed) helps them to do better in mathematics. Those who have additional learning or emotional needs are well cared for. Girls continue to do better than boys in some areas and staff are paying greater attention to the range of materials and texts that boys must access to develop and apply their skills.
- Pupils are positive about the many opportunities they have to develop their resilience, confidence and knowledge. They know about e-safety and the dangers associated with social media. Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. From a young age, they apply the school's rules and understand its values. Children in the early years know exactly how to behave to stay safe. The assemblies, the many clubs, sporting events, outings and whole-school performances promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- leaders of subjects check the quality of teaching and the accuracy of assessment more carefully so that governors know how well pupils are doing across the whole curriculum.

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

Yours sincerely

Marianick Ellender-Gelé  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with you, the deputy headteacher and other leaders. I met four governors, including the chair of the governing body. I spoke to a representative of the local authority. I read a wide range of documentation and

policies, including the school's self-evaluation, plans for improvement and relevant safeguarding information. I also checked the record that holds information about the statutory checks that are made on staff to ensure their suitability to work with children. I saw teaching and learning at first hand in most classes and looked at pupils' work in their books and on display in corridors. I talked to pupils in class and listened to some pupils read. I analysed 50 responses to the Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and seven additional comments sent by parents. I observed pupils in Year 3 and Year 4 rehearsing their Christmas performance, and several after-school clubs.

For this one-day inspection I focused on:

- pupils' achievement in English, mathematics and science
- the progress of different groups of pupils, especially those of low ability and the most-able pupils
- how well the school encourages all pupils to attend school regularly
- the quality of provision in the early years
- the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements.