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Mrs Fiona Lutman
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Lutman

Short inspection of Whitley Lodge First School

Following my visit to the school on 3 May 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 June 2012.

This school continues to be good.

Since the last inspection, you have provided dedicated leadership combined with high aspirations, which has driven the development of the school. Along with the other school leaders, you have accurately identified the school's strengths and priorities for improvement. Your detailed school evaluation links well to the development plan to ensure further improvement. The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Parents' comments sent to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, were overwhelmingly positive about the care, support and learning provided for their children.

You and your staff work hard to ensure that your school provides a harmonious, inclusive, and welcoming environment. Quality displays around school both support pupils' learning and celebrate pupils' achievements. High expectations and clear guidance such as the school's golden rules help pupils to grow in confidence and form good learning behaviours. Staff look for exciting ways to engage pupils in their learning. For example, during the inspection pupils developed their reading inference and deduction skills by trying to identify the mystery persons from the clues in a range of interesting items provided by the teacher.

The school has largely tackled the area identified for improvement at the previous inspection. Staff provide pupils with opportunities to work independently or together in groups to develop their learning. During our visits to lessons, we observed several examples where pupils developed their learning through open-ended and

investigative activities. This is helping pupils to develop independent learning skills. Pupils know what they are learning in class and your records in the front of English and mathematics books help pupils to see the progress that they are making in these subjects. Since the last inspection, you have introduced systems to track pupils' progress and attainment against the new national curriculum. This is providing staff and leaders with valuable information. Collaboration with other local schools is helping your staff to arrive at an agreed understanding of assessments of pupils' work. Your plans recognise that there is further work to do to embed this refined approach to assessment and systems for tracking pupils' progress fully. You and your leaders have identified that there is more to do to increase the proportions of pupils who are working at a greater depth, particularly in reading and mathematics.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors have ensured that current safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are of a high quality. You, your staff and governors give the highest priority to keeping pupils safe. Leaders carry out appropriate checks for all staff, governors and volunteers. The updated safeguarding policy meets current requirements. Staff and governors receive regular and appropriate training so they know how to keep pupils safe, including training about how to protect pupils from radicalisation and extremism. Your regular checks following training ensure that staff understand the school's safeguarding procedures and their own responsibilities. You manage referrals to other agencies effectively and have a determined approach to following up any safeguarding cases.

Staff provide pupils with guidance about how to keep themselves safe, including when they are online. Visitors further enrich this work. For example, during the inspection pupils benefited from an assembly led by the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) guiding them about how to stay safe. Pupils have a good understanding of the different forms that bullying can take and know that staff will help them if they ever have concerns. Pupils say incidents of bullying are very rare in their school. The school's records show that staff quickly address the infrequent incidents of misbehaviour and bullying. Parents, staff and pupils all agree that the school is a safe place to attend.

Inspection findings

- You and your leaders respond promptly to address school priorities. For example, you have analysed why last year's end of key stage 1 results for pupils who left Reception at expected levels were generally lower than the national averages for similar pupils, in reading, writing and mathematics. Your actions to improve the proportions of pupils working at greater depth in reading and mathematics are beginning to bear fruit. As a result, current pupils' progress information indicates that more Year 2 pupils will be working at a greater depth at the end of this year.
- In 2016, the school's results in the Year 1 phonics screening check fell below the national average. This was largely due to differences between boys' attainment when compared to that of boys nationally. When we visited phonics lessons in

Reception and Year 1 classes together, we found well-structured, engaging learning where the teachers generally matched work carefully to pupils' abilities. Your current pupil progress information is showing that boys are achieving at least as well as the girls in phonics and that overall pupils' outcomes will improve on last year's phonics results.

- Children start in the early years with skills and abilities that are generally typical for their age and some start with skills higher than what is typical. They make good progress and the proportions who leave Reception with a good level of development have been above the national average for the last three years. However, over time there has been a declining trend in the proportion of children achieving a good level of development, and this is linked largely to children's outcomes in writing falling, although they remain above national averages. Your leader for the early years has taken decisive action to reverse this pattern of decline. The introduction of a dynamic teaching approach, which engages children through speaking, actions and structured planning, is helping children to better develop their writing skills. Reception teachers provide children with a wealth of opportunities, including 'writing challenges', to develop their writing throughout their independent work. During our visits to classrooms, we saw some examples of how this was encouraging children to write in a range of contexts.
- The subject leader for English has a clear understanding of the priorities for improvement in her subject. She has taken relevant action to further improve pupils' progress in reading and writing, particularly to improve the proportions working at greater depth. There is now a stronger emphasis on teaching reading comprehension skills. The pupil progress information for current pupils is showing that pupils generally make good progress in reading and writing and that the proportions of pupils working at greater depth are increasing for current pupils.
- The subject leader for mathematics has reviewed the teaching of mathematics and identified the need to increase opportunities for developing pupils' problem-solving and reasoning skills. Staff training and new resources are helping teachers to improve the way pupils learn these skills. The introduction of mathematics meetings with pupils is helping to develop their mathematical language and explanations. In my meeting with pupils, they could explain to me how they had recently used mathematics reasoning in lessons.
- Governors have high aspirations for the school and are supportive of leaders and staff. Effective links between governors and leaders, particularly leaders of English and mathematics, help governors to be well informed about the school's priorities, the actions taken by staff and the impact on pupils' learning.
- The personal development and welfare of pupils is a key strength of your school. Throughout the inspection, pupils were well behaved and cooperated positively in lessons. They displayed good manners, were friendly and keen to share information about their school. Pupils enjoy the range of after-school clubs your school offers. Provision such as eco-club and school council develops pupils' citizenship skills and ensures that they are well prepared for life in modern Britain. Pupils' high attendance levels reflect how highly pupils and their parents value the education provided by you and your staff.

- Staff and leaders use the school website and meetings to provide parents with information about how English and mathematics are taught in school. This helps parents support their children's learning at home.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the work to moderate assessments with other schools is embedded and this ensures that the school's tracking system is populated with robust pupil progress information across all year groups.
- plans to increase the progress of pupils from their starting points in key stage 1 are completed and checked for impact, to ensure that attainment in reading, writing and mathematics for prior attainment groups at least matches that found nationally.

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

Yours sincerely

Michael Reeves
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this one-day inspection, I discussed the work of the school with you, the assistant headteacher and the leaders for English, mathematics and the early years. I talked with pupils about what it feels like to be a member of the school community. I observed and spoke with pupils during playtime and at other times during the day. I held discussions with the local authority representative and with four governors, including the chair of the governing body, who were able to provide me with additional information. I also took into account school documentation, assessment information, policies and information posted on the school website. I considered the 112 responses to the parent questionnaire, Parent View. I also reviewed the 20 responses to the staff questionnaire and the 76 responses to the pupil questionnaires. Alongside you, I visited five classes to observe teaching and learning. I looked at pupils' writing and mathematics work to help us evaluate the quality of teaching and learning over time. I also considered behaviour and attendance records and information relating to safeguarding.