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Mrs Julie Massen
Headteacher
Woodcocks' Well CofE Primary School
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Dear Mrs Massen

Short inspection of Woodcocks' Well CofE Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 11 October 2018, 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 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You provide strong leadership for the school, based on a very clear set of values. A distinctive feature of the school is the close working relationship between you and your very capable leadership team. Together, you conduct regular and detailed analyses of the school's performance. As a result, you have a very accurate understanding of its strengths and areas for development. Before introducing any changes, you conduct detailed research and discuss your ideas with the staff, so that there is a shared understanding of your intentions. You also check very carefully on the impact of your actions and are not afraid of amending or abandoning them if they are not effective.

You are supported and held to account by a committed group of knowledgeable governors. They pay regular visits to classrooms to check how effectively specific aspects of the school development plan are being implemented and share their findings formally. As a result, they have a very clear understanding of the school's strengths and where further improvement is needed.

At the time of the last inspection, leaders were asked to: develop pupils' skills in writing; improve the monitoring of work; and provide more challenge for different abilities, to ensure that all pupils make good progress. You have addressed almost all these areas successfully, but you agreed that there is still further work to be done to ensure that the most able pupils are challenged sufficiently and reach the standards of which they are capable.

You have placed a considerable focus on writing since the last inspection. The impact of this is reflected in improved results in national tests and in the quality of the work in pupils' books. In key stage 2, the pupils write confidently in a range of styles and for a variety of purposes. Their letters of application for posts within the school were well presented and included persuasive evidence of their suitability for the job. The poetry that I read showed a strong command of rhyme and rhythm and some very imaginative choices of words. In the best examples of creative prose writing, the pupils made effective use of a wide range of vocabulary to convey a sense of mood and atmosphere. In key stage 1, pupils were also making good progress. The most able had a firm command of spelling and knew how to improve their work.

Since the last inspection, you have made clear improvements to your monitoring procedures. You conduct regular analyses of pupils' work to identify those who are falling behind, so that they can receive additional help. You tailor this help to individuals' needs and check very carefully that it is leading to improvements. Where there is insufficient impact, you modify your approaches or find alternatives.

Because of the improved monitoring, the rates of progress have risen consistently for three years. Last year, progress was above average in reading, writing and mathematics. The proportions of pupils reaching the expected standards have generally been average or better. However, at the end of both stages, too few pupils achieve a greater depth of understanding or reach the higher standards. This suggests that pupils, especially the most able, are not always challenged sufficiently. This is borne out by comments made by some of the pupils and parents I met. Of the pupils who responded to the online questionnaire, almost a third said they were not consistently challenged in lessons. You agreed that this is an area for improvement.

All the pupils who spoke to me, and the majority of those who completed the online questionnaire, enjoy coming to school. Almost all would recommend the school to a friend. This positive view is also shared by parents. Those I met were very happy with the school, commenting particularly on its family atmosphere and on the approachability of staff. These views echoed the positive responses to the online questionnaire, where almost all parents said that they would recommend the school to others. Morale among staff is also high, with all of those who completed the online questionnaire saying that they are proud to work at the school.

The pupils behave well around the school and work with a high degree of concentration in the classroom. They are articulate, interested and very welcoming towards visitors. They relate well to each other and to the adults in the school.

The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of your school. The close links with the local church and the study of the major world religions provide a firm basis for pupils' spiritual development. Through discussions and displays, they are encouraged to reflect on their own actions and their effects on themselves and others. They have numerous opportunities to contribute to the leadership of the school through membership of such groups as

the ethos committee or by fulfilling the roles of monitors and 'headteacher' and 'assistant headteacher' for a day. They regularly play host to pupils from other schools who attend the 'evacuee days' in the original Anderson shelters on the school site. Pupils raise a considerable amount of money for charity. Their social and cultural awareness is further enhanced through the close links with a school in Japan, the regular visits and residential courses in which they take part and the history projects which they undertake with the local museum. Pupils have been very successful in national and regional chess, debating and literary competitions and several have had their work published. There is a strong emphasis on teaching pupils about democratic processes through visits to Parliament and giving them the opportunity to stand for election to posts in school. You provide a rich curriculum and a very stimulating environment. All this amply reflects your motto: 'In our school there is a world of wonder'.

Safeguarding is effective.

Parents, pupils and staff all say that children are safe at the school. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe on roads and near water and what they should do in the case of a fire. They know about the potential dangers of social media and the internet and what they should do if they encounter any unsuitable materials. They know which teachers to approach if they have any worries or concerns and are confident that they will receive any necessary help. They say that their learning is rarely interrupted by others' poor behaviour. They say that there is very little bullying in the school. When it does happen, it is usually dealt with promptly. There are effective systems for checking on the suitability of adults to work with children. The site is secure and access to the buildings is carefully controlled.

The children I spoke to said that they are not taught how to keep themselves safe near railways. Given that the school is barely a mile from a major national rail route, you agreed that this is clearly an area for improvement.

Inspection findings

- Results in the early years improved from 2015 to 2017. I wanted to know whether this upward trend is being maintained. You were able to show me that it is. Results in summer 2018 rose further, with a very high proportion of pupils reaching a good level of development. The pupils currently in the early years are also making good progress, as was evident from our classroom observations. Pupils displayed high levels of concentration and imagination, as well as strong language skills, when they became engrossed in pretending to rescue a cat from a burning house. They made very effective use of what they had learned during their recent visit to the local fire station.
- A second area that I discussed with you was pupils' performance in key stage 1. I was interested to know whether the improvements over the last three years are being maintained. Results in the phonics screening check for Year 1 pupils rose again in 2018 and were above the national average. The proportions of Year 2 pupils reaching the expected level rose in writing and mathematics but fell

slightly in reading. However, in all three subjects, the proportions achieving at greater depth remain low. You agreed that this is an area for improvement.

- Attendance at your school was consistently high from 2015 to 2017 and there were no exclusions. I wanted to know whether this record is being maintained. You showed me that attendance last year was again above average and that attendance so far this term has also been high. Similarly, there have been no exclusions. This is because you provide prompt and effective support for any pupil whose behaviour is challenging.
- The final area that I explored with you was the planning of your curriculum. In Autumn 2017, you and your staff conducted a very thorough review of the curriculum and reorganised the way that you plan topic work. As a result, pupils are offered a wide-ranging programme and there is continuity and development in teaching and learning across subjects. Pupils' experiences are further enriched by a wide range of extra-curricular activities which they clearly enjoy. However, some pupils say that they find the work in lessons too easy.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils receive consistent challenge, so that the proportions reaching higher standards or gaining a greater depth of understanding are at least in line with national averages
- pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe near railway lines.

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

Yours sincerely

Aelwyn Pugh
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I examined a range of documentation and held meetings with you and the leadership team to discuss your self-evaluation, the school improvement plan and the curriculum. I met the chair of the governing body and two governors. I spoke to your school improvement partner and representatives of the diocese and the local authority. You and I visited lessons to observe teaching and look at books. We also discussed behaviour, attendance and safeguarding. I met eight pupils, chosen at random from key stage 2. I examined the 54 responses to the pupil survey, the seven responses to the staff survey and the 38 responses to 'Parent View'. In addition, I spoke to 11 parents as they brought their children to school.