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Mrs Donna Evans
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Donna Evans

Short inspection of Westacre Middle School

Following my visit to the school on 14 March 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 February 2013.

This school continues to be good.

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

You have managed a number of changes to the senior leadership team since the last inspection. You now have a team that is supportive and effective and together you have been successful in bringing about positive change and improvement. You have the complete support of the governing body, and the Parent View questionnaire, to which there were 70 responses, showed that parents have confidence in you and the school.

Every initiative that you have implemented has been driven by your passion and determination to enable all children to be the best that they can. This is reflected in the new school motto, 'Inspire, Challenge, Achieve', which is to be seen all around the school as a constant reminder to all stakeholders.

Since the last inspection you have successfully addressed the areas for improvement identified at the time. You have established very strong links between the school and its feeder first schools as well as with the high school that the majority of your Year 7 pupils move on to. Leaders have been very proactive in ensuring that good-quality information about those pupils joining in Year 5 is gathered during the year leading up to entry. This has enabled a strong focus on tailoring the curriculum and learning to the needs of the individual and hence

ensuring that pupils make strong progress in their first year at Westacre Middle School.

During the learning walk that we conducted together it was evident that pupils including the most able pupils are fully challenged and make good progress in both English and Mathematics. However, there has not been enough time as yet for this to have a full impact on pupils achieving a greater depth of understanding. You have put in place successful strategies to raise the quality of teaching and learning that have enhanced the skills of all the staff.

You have developed robust on-going assessment during lessons, which allows teachers to adapt to the needs of individual pupils and plan effectively. Lessons provide for the different abilities and needs of the pupils enabling most pupils to make good progress. However there is still work to do to ensure that disadvantaged pupils make even stronger progress.

Safeguarding is effective.

All procedures and policies are in place to ensure that safeguarding has a very high profile. You have provided all staff with the appropriate training and have developed a shared understanding that the safeguarding of pupils is everyone's responsibility. By building relationships with outside agencies you have further strengthened safeguarding and provided deeper layers of support to ensure that all pupils are safe.

Pupils are very knowledgeable about how to keep themselves safe and this is well illustrated by the work that the school's 'Cyber Council' do in promoting e-safety. Your involvement of parents has given them confidence and a sense of security for the well-being of their children. This is shown by your determination to account for all children when absent, which parents appreciate as part of your responsibility and goes towards their sense of trust and faith in you.

Inspection findings

- You have made it a priority to respond swiftly to pupils' absence. Procedures are rigorous and action to establish the reasons for absence is immediate. As part of the school's ongoing drive to address high levels of absence and persistent absence amongst vulnerable pupils, leaders make sure that they have a good understanding of the circumstances relating to individual pupils and the factors influencing absence levels. However, the current absence levels are still too high for those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those pupils who receive free school meals.
- Pupils behave well and have positive attitudes towards learning. During lessons they work hard and support one another when working collaboratively. Their manners are impeccable and they show courtesy at all times and move sensibly around the school. Pupils are happy and say that behaviour is good. This is reflected in the behaviour records. When incidents of unacceptable behaviour

occur they are dealt with swiftly and the necessary action taken to eliminate reoccurrence.

- Teaching is good across the school. Imaginative tasks engage the pupils' interest and adults facilitate pupils' successful learning without hindering their research, endeavour or investigation. Tasks are well timed to ensure that pupils get the most from each one and teachers plan well, adapting plans on a daily basis to address pupils' needs and gaps in understanding. Pupils are challenged to work hard and they accurately judge their own work and what needs to be improved against given expectations. Pupils chat quietly and purposefully about work, share ideas and what they have learned.
- Disadvantaged pupils are making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. This was evident in books and from the current school data. A new initiative in mathematics, targeted specifically at disadvantaged pupils, is beginning to have a positive impact on the rate of their progress.
- Leaders are aware of the need to further increase the progress that disadvantaged pupils make in all subjects in order to diminish the difference in attainment between these pupils and all other pupils nationally. At present, although the progress of disadvantaged pupils is good, it is not strong enough to make up for ground lost by these pupils in the past and bring their attainment in line with all other pupils nationally.
- Leaders are conscious of the need to support most-able pupils to reach their full potential. Consequently, a number of strategies have been implemented to enable most-able pupils to make better progress. High-quality questioning about their work from teachers challenges pupils to think deeply. Teachers have high expectations and changes to the timetable have enabled small group teaching in mathematics to focus on the level of challenge for most-able pupils. However, there has not been enough time as yet to have the impact that will enable more of this group of pupils to achieve a greater depth of understanding.
- The school has identified the need to raise the levels of progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. To this end a number of strategies have been introduced recently to support these pupils more effectively. Recent initiatives, particularly in reading, are producing stronger progress although these are still to have the same level of impact in mathematics.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- attendance levels for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and pupils who qualify for free school meals are at least in line with national averages
- teachers maintain high levels of challenge for all pupils, especially those who are most able, to ensure that more pupils achieve a greater depth of understanding in English and mathematics

- disadvantaged pupils continue to make stronger progress to ensure that their attainment is in line with all other pupils 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 Worcestershire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Richard Ellis
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection I met with you, your senior leaders, other members of staff and governors. You and I conducted a learning walk, which involved visits to classrooms to observe the quality of teaching and learning. During this time, we took the opportunity to look at pupils' books together. I also spoke with a number of pupils about their learning and their experiences of being a pupil at your school. I looked at displays around the school and saw further examples of pupils' work. I scrutinised the single central record to check that it complies with the government's requirements. I held discussions with you as the designated safeguarding lead, looked at behaviour logs and reviewed attendance information. I spoke with staff and looked at the staff questionnaire results. I reviewed the 70 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire and spoke with a number of parents at the end of the school day.