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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mrs Leeson
Headteacher
Whittington Primary School
Common Lane
Whittington
Lichfield
Staffordshire
WS14 9LG

Dear Mrs Leeson

Short inspection of Whittington Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 15 May 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 October 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. The school has had some significant staff changes in the last 12 months. The current deputy headteacher led the school for one term before you were appointed as headteacher in April 2018. You and the leadership team have managed these changes well to secure a smooth transition for pupils, parents, carers and staff. Leaders are committed to ensuring that pupils have a successful and memorable experience at Whittington. They also ensure that the pastoral needs of pupils are very well met. As a result, pupils are happy to come to school. They behave very well and achieve good outcomes.

Parents and carers are extremely positive and hold leaders and staff in high regard. During the inspection, many parents praised the opportunities provided for their children, for example horse riding and the wide range of educational visits available. They also praised the 'friendly, approachable staff', who 'understand children really well'. Parents shared many examples of how staff respond quickly to any concerns they raise. Staff said that they are proud to be part of the school because they benefit from the support and encouragement of leaders. They all agree that pupils are at the heart of everything the school does.

Pupils are extremely positive about the care and support they receive from staff and one another. They said that everyone is kind and very welcoming to the many new pupils who arrive throughout the year. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about the opportunities they have to experience different sports, visits to activity centres and

a visit to France, and to take on additional responsibilities. Currently, pupils on the eco-council are involved in a project to reduce the amount of plastic used in school. They take this role very seriously because they are well aware of wider environmental issues.

At the last inspection, leaders were asked to ensure that teachers provide pupils with more challenging work as soon as the pupils are ready. They were also asked to ensure that pupils apply their literacy skills when writing in subjects from a variety of curriculum areas. Leaders have ensured that all teachers know their pupils well. Considerable improvements have been made in both of these areas. Teachers have strong subject knowledge, particularly in English and mathematics, and high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Therefore, teachers plan tasks to meet the needs of most pupils very well. Leaders make regular checks on the quality of writing that pupils produce in a range of subjects across the curriculum. The majority of pupils have a thorough understanding of how to use grammar and punctuation effectively in their writing, and they apply this very well when writing in subjects including history and geography. However, leaders are aware that some pupils need to make more rapid progress in writing in order to reach the standards of which they are capable.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors ensure that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Staff vetting and checking systems are thorough. All staff have appropriate training and receive regular updates in weekly staff meetings. As a result, all staff take their responsibilities seriously and are confident of knowing what to do if they have concerns. Records relating to child protection are stored securely and are well organised. Governors understand their role in overseeing and monitoring the effectiveness of school safeguarding procedures.

Parents and staff agree strongly that pupils in the school are safe. Parents said that the staff 'really care' about the pupils and that leaders are interested in the social and emotional well-being of pupils as well as ensuring that they make good progress.

Pupils said that they feel safe in school and they were able to talk knowledgeably about staying safe on the internet and road safety. They are confident that an adult in school would be able to help them with any concerns they might have.

Inspection findings

- Leaders have identified that boys are not yet achieving as well as girls in the Reception Year. The early years leader has revised the curriculum to ensure that boys are interested in the topics on offer. These now include topics that reflect their interests, including space and dinosaurs. Teachers develop writing skills well through all areas of the curriculum, for example in the construction and hospital role-play areas. Children's writing is celebrated through attractive displays in both

classrooms. Consequently, children, including boys, make strong progress from their starting points. This is evident in their books.

- The early years leader ensures that all staff apply the behaviour system consistently. As a result, children know exactly what is expected of them. Children are encouraged to behave well and enjoy the 'rainbow challenge' whereby they can earn rewards, including extra 'golden time'. Leaders can show where they work successfully in partnership with parents to improve individual children's behaviour. Children follow instructions the first time they are given. They work well with a partner when sharing resources and talking about what they are doing. In this way, behaviour in the Reception Year is very positive.
- The end of key stage 2 results show that pupils are academically prepared to move on from primary school. Attainment is well above national in reading, writing and mathematics. Leaders ensure that the curriculum on offer to pupils is broad, balanced and relevant. There is a tight focus on subject-specific skills and knowledge. Teachers track the progress pupils make in each subject area. This ensures that there is an accurate profile of what each pupil can do. Pupils' books show that they develop a wide range of subject-specific skills. This was particularly evident in science in which pupils are able to make and justify predictions, explain their findings and draw conclusions. However, you and other leaders recognise that you need to ensure that teachers provide a high level of challenge for the most able pupils in a wide range of subjects across the curriculum. This is because sometimes work is too easy for the most able pupils.
- Pupils apply their literacy skills to work in a range of subjects very well. There is consistency in the quality of writing in English, writing and topic books.
- You and other leaders ensure that pupils have a thorough understanding of British values. The school works with local services, including the police, the church, the army barracks and St Giles hospice. This provides pupils with an understanding of different services and how they work together to support the community. Pupils develop a detailed understanding of what life is like outside of their village. They spoke enthusiastically about the faith walk that all pupils take. This involves visits to large towns to explore a variety of places of worship. Each pupil has a 'Whittington passport', which includes lists of activities and experiences that each pupil in the year group will have before the end of the academic year. Examples include raising money for charity, looking after an animal and trying a new sport. Consequently, by the time pupils leave Whittington, they are well-rounded individuals who will flourish in modern Britain.
- You and the leadership team are able to show how the quality of teaching of writing has improved significantly over the last year. As a result of a thorough training programme, teachers are able to assess pupils' writing accurately. This means that teachers can plan work that moves pupils on. However, there is a significant minority of pupils in each year group who have not made enough progress. Leaders ensure that staff's knowledge of the features of writing, including the use of grammar, punctuation and spelling is deep. Teachers impart this knowledge well.
- Pupils have many purposeful opportunities to write at length. There is a high expectation of the language that pupils will use and an emphasis on how well the

writing will engage the reader. For example, in a mixed Year 3 and 4 class, pupils wrote very clearly and descriptively when they were attempting to persuade the prime minister to ban zoos. Writing progress is improving throughout the school, and many pupils make strong progress. However, you acknowledge that in some year groups less progress in being made and that further action needs to be taken.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the proportion of pupils making accelerated progress in writing in key stage 2 increases so that all pupils reach the standards of which they are capable
- the most able pupils are appropriately challenged and enabled to deepen their knowledge in a wide range of subjects across the 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 Staffordshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Jo Evans
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, senior and middle leaders, parents and governors. I spoke to a representative of the local authority on the telephone. I visited classrooms and looked at pupils' work. I also met with a group of pupils. I reviewed the school's website and documents, including the single central record, child protection systems, the school's self-evaluation, improvement plans, monitoring information and pupil progress and assessment information. I took account of the 51 responses by parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 49 comments from parents by text, and 19 responses from staff to Ofsted's questionnaire. There were no responses to the pupil questionnaire.