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Dear Mrs Parry-Jones

Short inspection of West Earlham Junior School

Following my visit to the school on 16 July 2019, 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 January 2016.

This school continues to be good.

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

West Earlham Junior School is a happy and vibrant school. Parents remark warmly about the care offered to their children and their children's enjoyment of school. Staff are viewed as experienced and approachable. Parents praise the school's inclusive nature. Pupils are polite and thoughtful, they discuss their learning confidently and say that their teachers inspire them to do well. They are friendly towards each other and to the adults who work with them. They talk positively about their time in school and the activities they enjoy the most. The sense of community within the school is very strong.

The governing body is well informed and effective. Governors are fully involved in the life of the school. Governors monitor the quality of education and regularly receive reports from curriculum leaders. They carefully check the progress of school initiatives such as the impact of the Hive, the school-led inclusion unit. Governors are eager to engage fully with the community and have high aspirations for the school and its pupils. They have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and what it needs to do to improve.

The school has continued to improve since the previous inspection. Pupils have made strong progress in reading and mathematics. The school has a very high proportion of disadvantaged pupils and additional funding is carefully spent to meet the needs of this group. They achieve well by the time they leave school. The regular opportunities pupils have for discussing books with adults and the attention given to developing reading has resulted in strong progress for many. However, because of inconsistencies in teachers'

expectations some pupils, especially the most able, do not make the progress that they are capable of.

My visit to your school coincided with your planned transition morning. I saw examples of strong teaching and adults beginning to build positive relationships with their new pupils. New pupils moving into school in September were made welcome and were engaging positively with their learning, they were well supported by the additional staff in the classrooms. Year 6 pupils feel well prepared for their moves to high school and say that they have learned a great deal in their last year at school. Pupils and parents are aware of the significant improvements in behaviour throughout the school. They praise the efforts made by staff; a parent commented, 'I feel very reassured that my child is safe and happy in school and have full trust in them to help my child grow.'

Safeguarding is effective.

All staff understand their responsibilities regarding safeguarding. They are vigilant and proactive. The school has a robust procedure for reporting concerns. These are followed up by a committed team. The school works well with other agencies such as local charities, the food bank and the local authority to ensure that your pupils are kept safe. You have developed strong working relationships with those parents who need additional help and support.

Governors make planned checks on safeguarding procedures. The school's record keeping is careful and detailed. Recruitment processes are secure, and all legal requirements are met.

The pupils that I spoke to told me that they feel safe in school. The premises are well maintained, and pupils are appropriately supervised. They play happily and say that there is always a lot for them to do. The school's anti-bullying ambassadors are clear about their responsibilities and the service they offer their peers. Because you prioritise pupils' well-being, they know about keeping themselves safe and have a good understanding of online safety.

Inspection findings

- The school's performance information indicated that while pupils were making good progress and attaining well in reading and mathematics, they were not doing so in writing. I wanted to explore why this was the case. The school focused on writing development as a main area for improvement throughout the year and I was able to see evidence of this having a positive impact. Writing and attainment in grammar, punctuation and spelling this year for Year 6 pupils was considerably higher than for previous years. Pupils are keen to write and those who were asked agreed that they enjoyed their writing lessons.
- Leaders have given careful thought to how the teaching of writing is sequenced. Teachers use a range of strategies to enthuse and inspire good writing and, where teaching is most effective, they use pupils' work as positive exemplars. Pupils can gauge their success in lessons against clearly understood criteria, and consequently they are always aware of what they need to do to improve. Year 5 pupils were writing

descriptive passages and rose to the challenge of including alliteration, personification and adverbial phrases. They clearly enjoyed reading and discussing their work with their peers. They were motivated to do well.

- There are, however, inconsistencies in practice. Teachers do not share the same expectations for learning. For example, in parallel classes pupils had the same writing task but very clearly one group was accomplishing more and making stronger progress than the other.
- The school's most able pupils have not, in the past, made as much progress in writing and mathematics as they have with reading. We explored how teachers were working towards securing better outcomes for this group of pupils. Your dialogue with feeder schools has developed a better understanding of assessment, curriculum direction and how to identify accurately the most able pupils. The school has ensured that teachers plan for high-attaining pupils and leaders check on the quality of this provision. Additionally, participation in activities like the inter-school mathematics competition at the University of East Anglia increase aspiration and foster a wider knowledge of the world around them. This approach is starting to have a positive impact. Most-able pupils talk of how they enjoy the challenges they are given. They are eager for success.
- I also looked at how the school supported pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The school makes good provision for pupils with SEND. The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) is knowledgeable and diligent. She checks pupils' progress regularly and follows up queries rigorously. Staff are well trained and provide good support for learning, and this enables pupils to make good progress from their starting points.
- Pupils with social and emotional difficulties are very well supported in the Hive, the school's inclusion unit. The Hive is new to the school and was developed in response to leaders' concerns over the rate of exclusion and the quality of education received by the small proportion of pupils experiencing social and emotional difficulties. Since its introduction the rate of fixed-period exclusions has decreased dramatically. The SENCo makes the most of these new arrangements and plans the curriculum to meet individuals' specific needs. This is high-quality provision. Behaviour and learning assessments demonstrate that pupils are making good progress as a result of this intervention.
- Staff and pupils recognise that behaviour in school has improved. Pupils comment on how teachers deal with low-level disturbance more effectively. Leaders have worked resolutely to improve school attendance this year. Rates of attendance have improved considerably and are now in line with national averages. The number of pupils who miss school regularly has reduced considerably.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they bring greater consistency in expectations for learning among staff and share the most effective practice so that pupils make strong progress equally throughout key stage 2

- they continue to develop strategies to support the most able pupils so that they make the progress of which they are capable and attain well.

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

Yours sincerely

James Richards
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

My inspection activities included: meetings with curriculum subject leaders, members of staff with responsibility for safeguarding and several governors. I also spoke to a representative from the local authority's school improvement service. I carried out learning walks with the headteacher, briefly visiting most classes. I spoke to pupils in lessons, at lunch and in the playground. I looked in depth at pupils' writing books.

During the inspection I reviewed a range of school documentation. This included leaders' evaluation of the school's effectiveness, and documentation relating to assessment, provision for pupils with SEND, attendance and safeguarding. I held a meeting with a group of pupils. I considered the small number of responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.