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Mrs Wendy Wing
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Dear Mrs Wing

Short inspection of Cuffley School

Following my visit to the school on 20 March 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 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. You, the governors and other leaders work closely together so that there is consistency in the drive to improve the school. You are all ambitious for the pupils and determined to improve their life chances. Together, you are achieving your plan that the school should be a place that develops and nurtures the whole child. Your staff are proud to be at the school. Teamwork is strong, staff feel valued, morale is high, and pupils are making good progress.

The school is a hive of activity. Teachers and teaching assistants work closely to make sure that no learning time is lost. Leaders have made sure that staff training has improved teaching across the school. As a result, standards have risen since the previous inspection and the school is going from strength to strength. Current pupils achieve well in mathematics and English and their attainment is above the national average at the end of key stage 2. However, you are not complacent and are putting in place actions to further improve the progress of pupils.

Governors are passionate about the school. They bring with them an excellent range of experience and expertise. They are appreciative of the regular, clear summaries of information which they receive. This enables them to ask you and your leaders and teachers searching questions about how well pupils are doing. Governors maintain a good strategic overview of the school and have played a key role in the school's continued improvement. You appreciate the support and challenge of your school improvement adviser from the local authority.

The rich, broad and balanced curriculum that you provide develops pupils' imaginations. This curriculum allows pupils to build and develop a range of skills year on year. They enjoy learning both in and out of the classroom. For example, pupils made good progress in history after they visited a local historical camp. Art and science are particular strengths and pupils' work is displayed throughout the school is of a high standard.

Pupils' behaviour was exemplary during the inspection. Your pupils were polite and courteous to me, their peers and adults alike. You have developed a school with a positive atmosphere and ethos. Pupils benefit from this working environment and they say that they enjoy attending school, that behaviour is very good and that they are immensely proud of their school. Pupils were keen to tell me that bullying is rare at Cuffley but when it does take place adults deal with this swiftly and it stops. At their request, your school council are currently planning an assembly to support pupils' and parents' understanding of the term 'bullying' so that everyone has a shared definition. Pupils told me that 'Everyone is different and at Cuffley School you can always be yourself,' highlighting the school's positive ethos and values that the school community hold dear.

The majority of parents and carers share pupils' very positive view of the school. Those who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online parent questionnaire, said that the school strongly promotes learning. The school provides numerous opportunities for parents to visit the school and support their children at home. For example, the school recently ran mathematics, reading and phonics workshops for parents which were well attended. Comments such as 'Staff at Cuffley School always make time to listen to parents,' and 'I feel that Cuffley has given my children the opportunity to achieve their potential, not just academically but as individuals too,' are the views of many. Despite the school's proactive approach to engaging with parents, a minority feel that communication could be improved.

Subject leaders are effective in their role and provide training and support for teachers and other adults. Teachers have benefited from recent art assessment training and have a greater understanding of how to assess art at the expected and greater depth standards. However, this is not yet consistent across other subjects. Consequently, not all subject leaders have a thorough understanding of the progress being made by pupils within their areas of responsibilities, in particular the most able.

Safeguarding is effective.

In your role as the designated safeguarding leader you work tirelessly to ensure that all safeguarding arrangements meet requirements. You make sure that staff fully understand their duty and follow systems and procedures for logging concerns. Together with the office manager, you ensure that all necessary checks are made on the suitability of staff to work with children.

You ensure that the promotion of safeguarding throughout the school has a high profile. You provide staff with training that is up to date so that they and members

of the governing body understand the current guidance. You are prompt in making referrals to the local authority. Together, you follow up concerns raised by staff and pupils. You make sure pupils are kept safe from potential harm. You work with a range of external agencies to provide expertise to support pupils' welfare as and when necessary. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of a high quality.

Pupils feel safe in the school. Pupils across the school receive plentiful training about staying safe online, in the local community and in the wider world because you interweave such themes across key stages and across the entire curriculum. You deploy staff well to ensure that pupils are kept safe outside and you and your governors have plans to further improve the security of the school site.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry focused on the work of the school's special educational needs (SEN) coordinators. In recent years the school has successfully supported a group of pupils to be awarded education, health and care plans (EHCPs) following extensive work with external agencies and families. Regular tracking of all pupils identified as having SEN and/or disabilities allows the school to make swift and accurate decisions in the provision that is provided to individual pupils. Parents are complementary about the current provision and made comments such as 'My son struggles with his learning but with the extra help and interventions they have put in place he is now improving.'
- The school has carried out recent training for staff in the areas of autism, speech and language and social and emotional difficulties. This has been well received by staff and strategies discussed have been implemented to good effect. Parents have also been invited to attend training and a recent autism workshop was well attended. As a result of the school's rigorous approach, pupils identified as having SEN and/or disabilities are accessing the curriculum and receiving extra support to enable them to make good progress from their starting points.
- My second line of enquiry centred on the progress and attainment of the most able pupils. In recent years the most able pupils have made good progress within reading, writing and mathematics consistently above the national averages at key stage 1 and key stage 2. School leaders reviewed the curriculum and have made changes that have impacted positively on the progress of the most able pupils. For example, pupils in upper key stage 2 now have opportunities to read texts with a high level of challenge such as 'Wolf Brother' and 'The Savage'. Analysis of the school's assessment information and pupils' workbooks suggests that the most able will once again make good progress in 2018 and beyond.
- The school has recently implemented strategies to develop key skills required for the most able pupils to exceed in subjects other than English and mathematics. For example, within art pupils are encouraged to produce artwork for competitions run by the National Gallery and are taught key skills required to be working at greater depth. However, this is relatively new in other subjects and the most able pupils do not consistently receive the high level of challenge within the foundation subjects as they do in English and mathematics.

- My third line of enquiry to establish if the school remains good, addressed the gender issue that has arisen within key stage 2. In recent years the progress of boys has not been in line with that of girls. The school is aware of this issue and has taken positive steps to narrow the difference in attainment between boys and girls. Governors and school leaders emphatically stressed that the work in closing the gap was not at the expense of girls. Evidence in workbooks supports this view and not only is the gap narrowing but girls are also making better progress than in previous years.
- School leaders and staff now plan for activities, both first-hand experiences and school trips that engage and excite boys. For example, a recent trip to a local safari park provided boys with opportunities to write a range of texts, from recounting events to persuasive arguments, to a high standard in line with that of the girls. School leaders have been successful in beginning to narrow the gap between boys and girls but acknowledge that there is further work to do before the gap is removed.
- My final line of enquiry focused on the progress of disadvantaged pupils. In recent years the progress of pupils eligible for the pupil premium grant has fluctuated as a result of the low numbers at the school. Current pupils are making good progress from their starting points and the school has adopted an individually tailored approach when planning how to address the difficulties faced by these pupils when learning. Leaders track the progress of disadvantaged pupils throughout the curriculum and, as a result, are able to target the pupil premium grant accordingly. Successful strategies surrounding attendance have been instrumental in ensuring that vulnerable pupils attend school regularly and make good progress across the curriculum.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the gender gap between boys and girls continues to diminish
- subject leaders have a comprehensive understanding of the assessment information within their areas of responsibilities so that they can monitor the progress of pupils, in particular the most able.

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

Yours sincerely

Joseph Figg
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I spoke with you and your senior leadership team, school governors and a representative from the local authority. I spoke to a group of pupils as well as individual pupils and members of staff around the school.

We made visits to lessons to observe pupils' learning and conducted several learning walks around the school. We also looked at pupils' books across a range of ages and abilities as well as information from the school's assessment system.

I scrutinised a range of documentary evidence, which included the school's self-evaluation, records of pupil behaviour, current progress information, subject leader monitoring and pupil attendance information. I evaluated safeguarding referrals and child protection records, including the single central record. I also looked at the school's website.

In addition, I took account of 109 responses to the Parent View online survey and 101 free-text comments from parents.