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Mr Carl Rogers
Headteacher
Whittington CofE (VA) Primary School
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Dear Mr Rogers

Short inspection of Whittington CofE (VA) Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 6 November 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 and further improved the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You know your school well and are accurate in your judgement of where Whittington Primary School is on its journey of improvement. Governors, parents and carers, pupils and the local authority adviser agree that the school has continued to improve under your committed, determined and collaborative leadership. The school has many strengths, including pupils' very good behaviour, leaders' and staff's commitment to the welfare and care of pupils and their families, and the strong progress pupils make in all phases in the school.

Leaders, staff and governors have developed a warm and welcoming environment in the school, with strong relationships between staff, pupils and their families. There is a real and tangible Christian family ethos, with all members of the school community recognising your inclusive approach to establishing partnerships. Leaders are determined to raise aspirations for all pupils. The nurturing and inclusive ethos is a key factor in breaking down barriers to pupils' learning. As a result, the attainment of current pupils is improving and they are making good, and sometimes better, progress.

Pupils are very polite, respectful and well mannered. They state that they enjoy lessons and appreciate the element of fun that teachers provide. Pupils value the variety of extra-curricular activities, including trips and various sports clubs. Parents feel that the school is really good at supporting their children and developing them academically. Parents typically comment, 'Whittington is a wonderful school.'

My son loves going to school. He receives a varied and rich education and feels loved by all that he comes across. I can't thank the staff enough for all that they do'. Others agree, stating that the staff are 'amazing'.

The school focuses well on pupils' social as well as academic development. Pupils say that they are well cared for. They thoroughly enjoy school and are encouraged to take ever-increasing responsibility as they grow older. For example, the school council and young leadership team gives pupils a good voice in the life of the school. Pupils feel that they are listened to and are able to contribute effectively to school improvement. Year 5 pupils were particularly keen to stress their responsibilities as lunchtime 'solution makers' wearing their 'high-vis' jackets and working with staff to ensure the continued smooth running of the school at this time of day.

Leaders and staff have taken effective action to address the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. You were asked to improve teaching and have made effective use of training and revisions of your curriculum to ensure that pupils make good progress in all subjects, including English and mathematics. Evidence seen in pupils' books during the inspection, together with recently published data, shows that the pupils are achieving good rates of progress at key stage 2. Standards being reached by Year 6 pupils in reading, writing and mathematics are improving. However, leaders also recognise the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, could be stretched and challenged even further particularly in mathematics.

You have also ensured that the governing body are provided with appropriate indicators that can be used by them to regularly check the progress pupils are making in every year group. Governors visit the school regularly and know the staff well. As a result of their monitoring, governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. They keep a careful check on the actions you take to improve outcomes, including for disadvantaged pupils. Governors ask probing questions and provide a good balance of challenge and support for leaders.

Safeguarding is effective.

As the designated lead for safeguarding you have ensured that all arrangements for the safeguarding of pupils are effective. Careful checks on the suitability of adults to work with pupils are made. All safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. The governing body has rigorous systems for checking that safeguarding procedures are up to date and effective. Regular training ensures that staff, including those new to the school, are fully aware of their roles and responsibility to keep pupils safe. They understand the importance of taking prompt action when they have any concerns about pupils.

You are proactive in your determination to make the school even more secure. For example, the recent refurbishment of perimeter fencing and installation of new

gates allowed you to plan even greater security for pupils to enter and leave the school safely.

Inspection findings

- The inspection focused on a number of key lines of enquiry, the first of which related to outcomes for all pupils and particularly the small number of disadvantaged pupils across the school. You and your deputy headteacher have a very clear understanding of the barriers to learning that face this group of pupils. This is because you know these pupils and their families very well. Teachers plan provision very precisely to meet disadvantaged pupils' needs. Leaders make regular checks on pupils' learning to ensure that additional support is having the impact that it should. You have taken steps to improve pupils' emotional and well-being needs, as well as providing additional support to improve disadvantaged pupils' attendance. Evidence from books and from the school's assessment information shows that these initiatives are proving successful and current disadvantaged pupils are making good progress in their learning.
- As elsewhere in the school, teaching in Years 1 and 2 provides increasingly good levels of challenge for all pupils. Consequently, the proportion working at greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics continued to improve in 2018.
- Highly effective leadership in the early years provides a strong foundation for children's learning. More recently, above-average proportions of pupils reach a good level of development by the start of Reception Year. The environment is bright and vibrant, and activities are well planned to meet children's needs. Teachers and teaching assistants are skilled and knowledgeable. Children's starting points are identified quickly when they join the school and adults plan carefully to address each child's learning needs. Opportunities to develop children's speech and language skills, as well as their writing and mathematical skills, are frequent in both inside and outside areas.
- The next key line of enquiry related to pupils' attendance. This was because over the past three years attendance, although remaining above national averages, has gradually declined. During the inspection, I found that staff check the attendance of pupils regularly and diligently follow up absences through phone calls and home visits. You strongly discourage parents from taking pupils out of school for term time holidays. Staff quickly put in place measures to prevent pupils from becoming missing in education. Your school learning mentor works closely with families to encourage pupils to attend school daily. Additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is used to improve attendance. As a result of the measures you have put in place, attendance of pupils across the school has improved and is significantly higher than the national average.
- The final key line of enquiry related to whether pupils are receiving a broad and balanced curriculum that is preparing them appropriately for life in modern Britain. Those pupils with whom I spoke said that they find their learning interesting. Pupils enjoy lessons in a range of subjects, including art, Spanish and music. They develop their knowledge of online safety alongside their computing

skills. Leaders plan many opportunities for pupils to take part in different sports, including at lunchtime and after school.

- Your appointment of a sports coach has been enthusiastically welcomed by pupils. One commented, 'We can now take part in many after-school clubs and play different sports like football, netball and cross country.' Pupils learn to be responsible citizens, caring for others and the environment. The school is justifiably proud of being one of the first Stonewall Ambassadors for LGBT in church schools nationally.
- You have rightly identified the need for many pupils to present their work more neatly and for staff to ensure that pupils spell more accurately. Current progress information across year groups indicates an improving picture, but you have not been complacent. School leaders at all levels are determined to raise standards of presentation and spelling. Where teachers are more focused and demanding, pupils rise to the challenge and present their work tidily and with fewer spelling errors. However, this practice is not universal in all classrooms and there remains further work to do to ensure that it is.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the same high standards of presentation and spelling seen in many pupils' books are more consistently applied across all phases in the school.
- the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, are stretched and challenged, particularly in mathematics.

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

Yours sincerely

Steven Cartlidge
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I spoke with parents at the start of the day. I also spoke with you and other leaders. We visited all classes together to observe pupils' learning and scrutinise their work. I talked to pupils in lessons and, in a separate meeting, I listened to their views about the school. I listened to some pupils read. A wide range of documentary evidence was scrutinised, including information about pupils' performance, the school's self-evaluation, the school development plan and safeguarding documentation. I met with the chair of the governing body and four other governors. I also met a representative from the local authority.

I took account of the 61 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including the 43 free-text comments. I also considered the 27 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and the 21 responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire.