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Mr Gary Soars and Mr Richard Green
Interim Headteachers
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Long Road
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Dear Mr Soars and Mr Green

Short inspection of William Read Primary School and Nursery

Following my visit to the school on 31 October 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 December 2014.

This school continues to be good.

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

In the last two years, there have been changes both to the staff team and the governing body. During this time, the determination to improve pupils' achievement has made a positive difference. Pupils are receiving a good and improving education and most are making good progress. You were rightly pleased with the most recent outcomes for pupils in key stage 1 and key stage 2 in the 2018 national tests. These results showed that the proportions of pupils in key stage 2 reaching the expected standard was above average in reading and mathematics, with an increasing proportion reaching the higher standard.

On undertaking the role of interim headteachers in the autumn term 2018, you ensured that you understood the school very well by evaluating its work. Your self-evaluation accurately identifies the school's strengths and points out where improvements are needed. For example, pupils' achievement in writing is not as strong as in other subjects, and this is a current priority. Individual action plans point to the next steps and the targets that you are working towards.

Staff recognise that you have ensured consistency for the school in providing a good quality of education. The vast majority of staff who responded to Ofsted's questionnaire agreed that the school is led and managed well. A parent commented that, 'It will be exciting to see how the school continues to develop under its new leadership.'

Changes in the governing body include a new chair and other new governors. Governors take their roles seriously and are committed to the school. They have undertaken a skills audit and, as a result, have sought training from the local authority to ensure that they have the necessary breadth of knowledge and skills to carry out their responsibilities effectively. They are increasingly involved in checking the work of the school and creating plans for future improvements. Governors share your enthusiasm and desire to raise standards further.

The good relationships and mutual respect between teachers and pupils result in a calm and purposeful atmosphere in classes and around the school. Pupils are very supportive of their teachers. One pupil informed me that, 'Teachers work really hard and I enjoy lessons.' Pupils are also supportive of each other. They told me that pupils are 'friendly' and they enjoy the teamwork opportunities in school. Pupils also enjoy the range of after-school and lunchtime clubs, sporting events and trips.

Leaders and governors have focused well on the areas for improvement from the previous inspection. For example, the school's overall rate of attendance has improved to the national average as a result of the school monitoring attendance carefully and taking effective action to address concerns. You acknowledge that you need to support pupils further to improve the quality of their writing. Governors are aware that they need to further develop their skills and knowledge to strengthen their effectiveness.

Safeguarding is effective.

Pupils' safety is a high priority for the school. Leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. All staff are provided with safeguarding training when they join the school, and this is updated annually. Staff are kept up to date with any changes as they occur. You ensure that all the appropriate pre-employment checks are carried out on staff and volunteers. Staff know their pupils well. Any concerns are reported, considered carefully and prompt action is taken. Case files are detailed and well organised.

Pupils spoke confidently about the ways in which school leaders and staff work hard to keep them safe and look after them. Pupils say that they feel safe in school and staff agree. Pupils know who to go to if they have a concern and they feel supported by the ways in which issues are resolved. Pupils know how to keep safe on the internet and the reasons for doing so. Pupils understand what bullying is and they explained that, while it may happen, it is resolved quickly and effectively by staff. Pupils also understand how to keep themselves safe outside school.

Inspection findings

- To ascertain that the school remained good, one of my key lines of enquiry was about pupils' achievement in writing at key stages 1 and 2. In 2017 and 2018, outcomes in writing at both key stages were in line with the national average. The outcomes for the most able pupils were below the national average. Progress in writing was improving. You are aware that this remains a priority for the

school in order to bring progress in line with that of reading and mathematics. You have plans in place to improve the teaching, learning and assessment of writing further.

- You have ensured that pupils have a good understanding of grammar and punctuation. Spelling is also a focus of their work. Pupils receive guidance from their teachers to ensure that their grammar, punctuation and spelling are accurate. As a result, by the end of Year 6 in 2018, the majority of pupils were able to use punctuation and grammar correctly and achieve above the national average in the English grammar, punctuation and spelling test.
- Staff have received training in how to improve pupils' progress and attainment in writing. As a result, staff plan an increasing number of opportunities for pupils to write at length across the curriculum. Pupils write factual reports, letters and instructions as well as stories and poems. For example, Year 6 pupils wrote a non-chronological report about how animals were used during the First World War.
- However, pupils are not as confident as they should be when writing in a range of different genres. You have identified the importance of developing pupils' editing skills to secure further improvement. In particular, you have identified that pupils require more support with choosing the right vocabulary and writing interesting sentences.
- My second line of enquiry was to find out how effectively reading is taught to the most able pupils so that they make good progress. You have ensured that pupils enjoy reading. Pupils have regular guided-reading lessons and complete quizzes to monitor their progress and understanding of the books they read. As a consequence, pupils' achievement in reading at key stages 1 and 2 has improved and is now strong at the end of key stage 2. Some most-able pupils did suggest, however, that they would like to be challenged more with the reading activities that they are given during guided reading.
- I also sought to establish the breadth and richness of your curriculum. The pupils I spoke to were very appreciative of the curriculum. Pupils have ample opportunities to develop their sporting skills through a range of sports and clubs, and they participate in competitions and festivals. In addition, pupils learn a foreign language and develop critical scientific skills by considering the 'big questions', such as 'If electricity cannot be seen, how do you know it is there?' To deepen pupils' learning, you organise 'learning days' that focus on one specific subject, such as the Stone Age, which pupils enjoy.
- My final line of enquiry centred on attendance and behaviour in school. Pupils who have previously found it hard to make the correct behaviour choices are increasingly able to do so due to the careful and well-judged support they receive. You address the emotional and social well-being of these pupils where necessary. For example, you have provided counselling and additional support in school.
- Despite the good behaviour evident throughout the inspection, a small number of pupils stated that behaviour could be better at school. Pupils spoke about the school's values of respect and responsibility, and one pupil said, 'Children should

be role models for others.' Another pupil said, 'I think we need to work more on respect.'

- You have also focused on improving the attendance of pupils to ensure that all can access the curriculum as fully as possible. Through a range of strategies, including the support of personalised plans and 'attendance ambassadors', the school's overall rate of attendance has improved to the national average. Pupils are very clear about the importance of attending school regularly, and they like the attendance assemblies and rewards, which recognise good and improved attendance.
- School processes for monitoring attendance are now strong and staff use a range of appropriate strategies both to reward and encourage attendance, and to challenge absence. However, a number of parents persist in removing their children from school for a holiday in term time.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- staff provide pupils with precise support that enables them to improve the quality of their writing
- the effectiveness of the governing body strengthens so that it has the skills and expertise necessary to ensure the continuing improvement of the school
- teachers challenge the most able pupils more effectively so that their progress strengthens in reading in key stage 2.

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

Yours sincerely

Ashley Best-White
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I held meetings with you, other senior and middle leaders, a group of three governors and a representative from the local authority. I spoke to a group of pupils and individual pupils around the school. We made visits to lessons to observe pupils' learning and took a learning walk around the school. We also looked at pupils' books across a range of ages, abilities and subjects, as well as information from the school's assessment system. I scrutinised a range of documentary evidence, which included the school's self-evaluation, the school development plan, current progress information and pupils' attendance information. Policies and procedures for the safeguarding of pupils were examined, along with the school's record of checks

carried out on staff working at the school. I evaluated safeguarding referrals and child protection records. I also looked at the school's website. In addition, I considered the 11 responses to the pupil questionnaire and the 46 responses to the staff questionnaire. There were insufficient responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, for me to be able to consider the results. However, I took account of the six free-text responses that were received.