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20 April 2018

Mrs Debbie Miller  
Headteacher  
Wheatcroft Primary School  
Stanstead Road  
Hertford  
Hertfordshire  
SG13 7HQ

Dear Mrs Miller

### **Short inspection of Wheatcroft Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 27 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 May 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 is a happy, caring community. Pupils are polite and welcoming, and behave well. They enjoy school and benefit from a rich and varied curriculum.

You and the deputy headteacher have provided insightful leadership, since taking up your current posts in September 2017. You have successfully steered the school through a time of considerable change in leadership and staff. You have set a clear direction for the school and are creating an open culture where staff are keen to develop their practice and feel well supported.

You have made sure that teaching is effective, paying suitable attention to areas of relative weakness. Lessons are calm and purposeful. Pupils engage well with their learning, take pride in their work and make good progress. Teaching in mathematics at key stage 2 has improved. In early years, increased opportunities for writing are helping ensure that pupils achieve as well in writing as in other areas of development.

You are improving the way you support pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities and those pupils who are disadvantaged. Leaders are tightening the way they track, review and adjust the support, so it meets pupils' needs increasingly well. You recognise that some of these pupils have further catching up to do to maximise their achievement.

Subject leaders, many of whom are new to post, are playing an increasingly pivotal role in monitoring and developing the curriculum and quality of teaching. Presently, leaders'

understanding of the extent to which the curriculum enables pupils to make strong progress is clearer for some subjects than others. You are well placed to resolve this issue.

Many parents and carers are encouraged by recent improvements in communication and reported on the school's many strengths. Notable parental discontent reported at the previous inspection is no longer evident. One parent commented, 'The school definitely feels as though it is listening and supporting parents and children more in the last few months', reflecting the views of many.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders ensure that pupils are kept safe. All safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. Checks on the suitability of staff are thorough. Leaders, staff and governors are fully aware of their safeguarding responsibilities. As leader for safeguarding, you keep a sharp oversight of all pupils who might be vulnerable or at risk. The deputy headteacher has stepped successfully into her new role as deputy leader for safeguarding. Frequent communication between you helps ensure that pupils who need it receive helpful, timely support. When necessary, you work effectively with other agencies such as social services and the police to secure support for pupils at risk of harm.

Pupils reported that they feel safe. They are confident that any concerns or issues they have would be dealt with. They are sure they can turn to an adult for help if needed. Pupils learn to be safe online and in the world around them. Pupils are clear about the importance of respecting one another regardless of background or other differences.

### **Inspection findings**

- Leaders have worked effectively to improve teaching in mathematics at key stage 2. Staff training and the introduction of a new scheme for teaching mathematics have proved helpful. Teachers have high expectations and set work of suitable challenge for pupils of differing abilities, including the most able. A heightened focus on reasoning and problem solving is helping pupils strengthen their mathematical understanding. Pupils are making increasingly good progress in mathematics.
- Leaders are improving the support that is in place for pupils who need extra help, including those pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils. A reading catch up programme, introduced last year, proved effective. Building on this, leaders have increased the 'out of class' support on offer. A suitable method is now in place for identifying pupils who need support and ensuring that support is provided and effective. Leaders are developing the way they assess the impact of the provision to make sure they have a precise understanding of what is working and where adjustments are needed. It is too early to see the full effect of these recent changes. School information shows that typically these pupils still have some further catching up to do to achieve really well by the end of their key stage.
- In recent times, children have typically made good progress in early years. However, fewer children have achieved well in writing than in other areas of development. The new leader for early years is working effectively to resolve this issue. Children have

increased opportunities for writing during activities they initiate themselves. Well-structured literacy sessions have improved the way children are helped to develop their writing, recalling and applying their knowledge of phonics.

- You are holding subject leaders increasingly tightly to account for the subjects they are responsible for. Subject leaders' check on the quality of topic plans, teaching and pupils' work helps ensure that subjects are planned and taught well. The introduction of a 'leader's impact log' is proving successful. This has heightened the expectation on subject leaders to review and report on the effectiveness of their work. Subject leaders are responding well to this, making sure they check the success of new initiatives.
- Well-developed assessment processes in subjects such as English, mathematics and science, help provide leaders with a sharp understanding of the impact of teaching on pupils' progress. Leaders have a broad understanding of the quality of teaching in other subjects. However, their understanding of pupils' achievement is not consistently incisive. The willingness of leaders to learn and share effective practice means you are well placed to resolve this issue and secure further improvement.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils catch up from any previous underachievement and make consistently strong progress
- they gain a fully comprehensive understanding of the quality of the curriculum, so they can make sure pupils' achievement is consistently high across subjects.

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

Diana Choulerton  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

I met with you and the deputy headteacher at the start of the day. We discussed your evaluation of the school's effectiveness and agreed the key areas we would focus on during the inspection. During the day, I held further discussions with you and the deputy headteacher and met with other leaders. I met with five members of the governing body including the chair and vice-chair. I also spoke with staff, pupils and parents. I made short visits to lessons, with you and the deputy headteacher, to look at pupils' learning in mathematics and at writing in early years. We also jointly scrutinised a selection of pupils' work in mathematics, humanities and science. I took account of 26 staff survey responses and 139 responses to the pupil survey. I also took account of 94 responses by parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 59 free-text responses. I had a short

discussion by phone with a representative from the local authority. I analysed a range of the school's documentation, including leaders' checks on pupils' progress, and safeguarding policies and procedures.