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Mr Glyn Rushton
Principal
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Dear Mr Rushton

Short inspection of Woodnewton – A Learning Community

Following my visit to the school on 17 July 2018 with Nina Bee, Ofsted Inspector, 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 since the last inspection.

Woodnewton – A Learning Community is a larger-than-average school. It is a vibrant, friendly school where all feel welcome. Since becoming the full time interim principal in September 2017, you have built on the strengths of the school. You are passionate about achieving the best for the pupils in your care, and have successfully established yourself as a calm, purposeful and determined leader. The governors have recently appointed you to the permanent substantive post of principal, from September 2018.

You work closely with staff and governors and know the school well. This has resulted in a cohesive team which provides pupils with a well-rounded education. Despite a period of instability due to staff changes, you have remained focused and have developed a strong senior management team, and reflective team of middle leaders. As a result, there is effective leadership across the school. The leadership is passionate about raising academic achievement and providing a supportive and caring environment which enables all pupils to flourish. Staff and governors value the good work of the leadership team. Parents say that their children enjoy coming to school, and that the staff are caring and approachable. As one parent explained, 'Woodnewton is a good school in which my son is thriving; the teachers are very kind and do their utmost to encourage him to be the best version of himself.' Another parent commented, 'Despite there being a recent change in leadership, the school continues to impress me.'

Leaders have accurately evaluated the school's strengths and areas for development. There is a clear plan for improvement and you work effectively with your team to address

weaknesses. Leaders make checks on the quality of teaching and provide training and support for staff where needed. You hold teachers to account for the progress their pupils are making. This focus on securing good-quality teaching throughout the school is having a positive impact in most areas of pupils' achievement. The progress pupils make in key stage 2 mathematics, however, is not as good as the progress they make in reading and writing.

In the 2017 standard assessment tests, the proportion of key stage 2 pupils who met age-related expectations was broadly in line with that seen nationally for reading, writing and mathematics. For key stage 1, the proportion of pupils meeting age-related expectations for reading and writing was above national figures and broadly in line with the figures for mathematics. In Year 1, the proportion of pupils achieving the threshold for the national phonics screening check was above the national figures.

You are aware that the school still has work to do to address all the areas for improvements identified at the last inspection. Leaders have ensured that effective strategies have been implemented to support disadvantaged pupils to make the same progress as non-disadvantaged pupils. The proportion of these pupils that achieved age-related expectations in the key stage 2 standard assessment tests in 2017 in reading, writing and mathematics was broadly in line with the national figures. In 2016, disadvantaged pupils in the same tests achieved below the national figures.

Leaders are working hard to continue to raise standards in reading by fostering a love and passion for books, including bringing them alive through drama, dance and song. This was evident in the pupils' absolute joy when Year 6 pupils performed the play 'Romeo and Juliet'. They had carefully learned their lines and acted their parts beautifully. Pupils were articulate and spoke with expression. They brimmed with pride and confidence in front of their equally proud parents and carers; there was a real community feel to the occasion.

The curriculum has been planned thoughtfully. It is broad and balanced and inspires pupils to learn. There are engaging topics, which place a high emphasis on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils are taught about other cultures and religions; they are curious about the world. Pupils told us of the importance of respect and tolerance. These values, along with acceptance and kindness, are reflected in the way pupils work and play together. The staff promote this ethos with bright inviting displays in and around their classrooms. The outdoor environment is well cared for and an inviting place for the pupils. We saw one class enjoying walking their daily mile. There are opportunities for pupils to enjoy a wide range of sports: one pupil said they had loved trying archery. Pupils told us how they liked to play competitive sports such as football against other schools. They spoke about how important their sporting conduct was when representing Woodnewton school.

Pupils' behaviour and personal development are strengths of the school. They are polite, friendly and courteous and move around the school with a calm sense of purpose. Talking to pupils was a pleasure. They told us they enjoy coming to school and take pride in their work, this was evident in their books. Pupils are proud of their school and especially enjoy sport and topic work. They were keen to tell us about all the good things that happen. They feel that behaviour in the school is good and that it has improved a lot this last year. The levels of overall absence and persistent absence continue to be an issue for the school: they are higher than the national averages. The leadership, including governors, recognises this

as a priority for improvement.

Safeguarding is effective.

You, your leaders and the governing body have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. The passion the whole leadership team has for the welfare of the pupils in their care has driven the culture within the school. You have ensured that robust systems and procedures are in place. There is effective training for staff and they are aware of the latest safeguarding guidance. Records are detailed and secure. Leaders, and other staff, know individual pupils and families well. The leadership liaises with external agencies and actively seeks help for families. Parents said that they felt that they could come and talk to leaders or other members of staff if they had a concern. You employ an education welfare officer who works very closely with the senior management team and works actively to support families. Pupils say they feel safe in school; they know who to go to if they have a problem and are confident they would always get help. Pupils feel that this last year there has been very little bullying in school but if there is any it will quickly get sorted out. They are taught how to keep themselves safe; for example, they do bike safety on the road, they knew how to stay safe online, and the police come to talk to them about safety when out of school.

Inspection findings

- Governors are highly committed to the school and work hard to promote its vision and ethos. They have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses through monitoring visits, meetings with school leaders, and scrutiny of assessment data and reports. They commission reports to get an external view of the school. Governors know that strong gains are needed in mathematics in key stage 2 and in improving attendance. The school is part of The Woodnewton Academy Trust and the governors work closely with two other schools within the Trust to share resources and to develop professional expertise. They are aware that there has been instability within the trust and at the school due to staff changes. Governors are confident, due to the strong leadership you have demonstrated this year, that your appointment as the substantive principal will enable the school to develop further and raise standards. The governors since the previous inspection have effectively held the leadership to account. They commissioned an external review of the pupil premium funding to develop the most effective use. They have ensured that the range of strategies put in place to support disadvantaged pupils is monitored closely, evaluating the impact and making sure standards improve.
- In the early years the leadership has a clear understanding of strengths and areas for development. Leaders ensure that weaknesses are addressed and that standards are improving. Children make good progress from their starting points. There are high expectations and warm positive relationships. The children were seen to be literally skipping into school in the morning! Parent partnership is a real strength and trusting, respectful relationships are well established. In all of the early years settings the classrooms are bright, engaging and planned carefully to promote children's learning. As a result, children are motivated and spend long periods of time on activities. In the outside environment there are a wide range of planned activities, promoting effectively different areas of learning. Inside the classroom children were confidently using wood to make rockets and aeroplanes. Other children were happily and independently making

healthy choices from a range of food, carefully making crackers, using utensils.

- Overall absence and persistent absence have been consistently above the national average for the past three years. Since your appointment, you have significantly raised the profile of attendance among parents and pupils and made it a key priority on the improvement plan. There are visible signs of this in and around the outside of the school. Parents told us how important attendance is to their children's education. There are weekly rewards for attendance and punctuality. The behaviour and attendance senior leader works closely with a range of staff including the full-time attendance officer to identify and support families. There is a breakfast club to facilitate attendance. Two parents told me of the difference the parenting support they had received had made to them. This had improved the attendance of their child, but also helped them to manage their child's behaviour at home. They said they could not thank the school enough. The school is now providing a similar programme for groups of parents in September. While there was evidence of improved attendance for individuals, these strategies have not yet had time to have an impact on overall attendance.
- Standards in mathematics across key stage 2 present an inconsistent picture. Some examples of work seen had been planned well to meet the needs of all the different pupils, but this was not always the case. The scrutiny of pupils' workbooks showed that pupils took pride in their work. In Years 5 and 6 books the work confirmed that most pupils had made good progress over time and were working at age-related expectations. The school's assessment data for attainment for the end of Year 6 in 2018 shows that pupils did not achieve as well in mathematics as they did in reading and writing.
- As the interim principal you have restructured the middle leadership into teams. The mathematics leadership team knows the strengths and weaknesses of the subject and has a clear action plan to address weaknesses. Mathematics leaders produce reports on their impact for the governing body. They have gathered information to show where vulnerable groups are not doing well and what actions are in place to address this. Effective strategies identified in key stage 1 such as the use of mastery mathematics are being introduced into key stage 2.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- standards improve in mathematics by ensuring that teachers plan the lessons to meet the learning needs of all pupils regardless of their abilities and needs, so that all pupils make good progress
- they continue to develop strategies to ensure that both overall and persistent absence are at least in line with the national averages.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the interim chief executive officer of The Woodnewton Academy Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Northamptonshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Lindsay Alldis
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, the team inspector and myself met with you, other leaders and governors to discuss the school's progress since the last inspection. I also met with the interim chief executive officer from the Woodnewton Academy Trust. We met with groups of parents at the beginning of the school day. We spoke with pupils informally during the day and held a meeting with a group of pupils. We scrutinised with the leadership a wide range of information, including policies and records relating to safeguarding, the school's self-evaluation, its plans for improvement and its review of spending on the pupil premium and the physical education and sport premium. We looked at assessment information for previous year groups and those pupils currently in the school. I considered the 57 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View and analysed the 43 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire. Together, you and I conducted a focused walk around the whole school and observed learning in several classes, as did the team inspector with a senior leader. The inspectors also scrutinised a large sample of mathematics books from Years 5 and 6 alongside a senior leader.