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Mrs Manjit Bringan
Headteacher
Whitehall Infant School
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Dear Mrs Bringan

Short inspection of Whitehall Infant School

Following my visit to the school on 19 March 2019, 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 March 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You, the staff and governors have an accurate view of the quality of education and have ensured that the school has continued to improve. Your strong and caring leadership, ably supported by the proactive governing body and dynamic senior leadership team, has created a culture of high expectations and aspirations for the pupils and school community. You have ensured that leadership is distributed and have supported the development of leaders well. Leadership is highly effective and this has enabled teachers and support staff to ensure that pupils get an excellent start to their education.

Your school values of 'five-star learning for all, with family at the heart of everything we do' is evident across the whole school. Leaders and staff know the families and community very well and work closely with parents to support pupils' learning, development and well-being.

Parents are extremely happy with the school. All parents who were spoken to during the inspection and those who completed Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, would recommend the school to other parents. One parent commented: 'The teachers and support staff are second to none, dedicated and care deeply about their pupils. The head teacher is a gift: so friendly, warm and generous with her time and clearly values every child.' Another parent said: 'I am thrilled to find the extra-curricular activities and "extras" they organise to enhance my child's education such as the living eggs to teach the children about chickens and the excursions they organise. It

all adds up to a happy learning environment. I am very happy I chose Whitehall as the school for my daughter to start her educational journey.'

There is good staff morale and all staff feel their work is valued. Staff who completed the staff survey say they enjoy working at the school. As a result, there is a strong team ethos and staff want to do their best for the pupils.

Pupils are also very proud of their school and enjoy lessons. At a meeting with pupils held during the inspection all pupils were extremely positive about their school. One pupil, when referring to the school's five-star value system, commented, 'We are a five-star school, but I'd give it six stars as it's so good.' Pupils are given a range of responsibilities and there is an active range of groups such as the school council, eco-warriors and exercise ambassadors which ensure that their voice is strong across the school.

Pupils work hard in lessons and collaborate well, trying their best in their work. They have excellent attitudes to learning, standards of behaviour are high and the conduct of pupils during the inspection was exemplary.

There was a slight dip in results at the end of key stage 1 for two consecutive years following the previous inspection, but at the end of 2018 results were much improved. Teaching has improved during the last two years and is continuing to develop through regular monitoring and staff training. As a result, current pupils are making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding at the school. There are well organised systems and procedures in place to ensure that any concerns about a child's welfare are recorded swiftly and followed up rigorously by the designated safeguarding leaders in school. Safeguarding records are of a high quality and the recent introduction of an online recording system has further improved information sharing. School leaders work closely with a range of external agencies to ensure that pupils and families are supported effectively when needed. The recently appointed learning mentor is ensuring that more parents are able to access support from other agencies. Staff and governors receive regular training to update their awareness of safeguarding issues and procedures. Governors regularly monitor safeguarding arrangements and check the effectiveness of policies and procedures. Pupils feel safe in school and know that they can talk to an adult if they have any concerns. They are knowledgeable about how to stay safe online and the potential dangers of using the internet. All parents who responded to the Parent View survey agreed that their children feel safe at school.

Inspection findings

- My first key line of enquiry was to look at how effective the school has been in improving the quality of pupils' writing. This is because the proportion of pupils

achieving the expected standard in writing has been below the national average for the last three years.

- The relaunch of a talk-based approach to writing and the consistent delivery of this across the school have greatly improved the quality of writing. As a result, pupils now have the skills necessary to produce good-quality writing.
- The focus on developing pupils' vocabulary has also led to an improvement in the quality of pupils' writing. Teachers' high expectations mean pupils are now using a range of complex vocabulary which has enhanced their spoken and written language. Improvements in pupils' vocabulary were evident in the good-quality writing displayed in classrooms and corridors around the school.
- During our learning walks, there was evidence of pupils being given a range of opportunities to develop the quality of their writing. Pupils in Year 2 were writing persuasive texts in preparation for a debate. In Year 1, pupils were writing narrative pieces inspired by 'The Lighthouse Keeper's Lunch'. Pupils are given opportunities to write in a range of curriculum subjects. However, the quality of this writing is not as good in other subjects as it is in pupils' English books.
- Children in the Reception classes were really enjoying writing wanted posters for the big bad wolf and sentences linked to the story of 'The Three Little Pigs'. The quality of writing in these classes was good. However, staff in Nursery were not encouraging children to choose activities for writing and mark-making. Children were therefore missing opportunities to develop their early writing and letter formation.
- My second key line of enquiry was focused on disadvantaged pupils' outcomes in writing. This is because there have been significant differences between the attainment in writing of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils in school.
- School leaders and teachers have high aspirations for disadvantaged pupils and work hard to ensure that they make good progress in writing, based on their starting points. The pupil premium grant is being used effectively to provide additional support in writing for disadvantaged pupils.
- Lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' writing demonstrate that attainment gaps in writing between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils are closing across the school. However, while improving for most disadvantaged pupils, disadvantaged pupils whose first language is English are not writing as well as their peers who speak English as an additional language. School leaders are aware of this and are working to improve this.
- My third key line of enquiry was to look at the provision for the most able pupils. Since the previous inspection, the proportion of pupils achieving the highest standard at the end of key stage 1 has increased to above the national average.
- Due to effective training and support for teachers, in the majority of classes teaching stretches and challenges pupils to work at a high standard. Work matches pupils' needs, especially the most able. Teachers and support staff have high expectations and the pupils respond positively to this in their responses and recorded work. As a result, pupils are given the time to ensure that there is depth to their learning.

- My final key line of enquiry was about how effective the school is in raising levels of attendance and reducing persistent absence. This was because attendance levels have been below the national average for the last three years.
- School leaders have taken a strong and robust approach to managing attendance. Newly implemented rigorous systems and procedures are beginning to have a positive impact on attendance. Attendance has improved this academic year and the numbers of persistent absentees has also fallen. The introduction of the HERO attendance reward scheme has helped to increase attendance levels. Pupils are keen to be a hero and be 'Here Every day Ready On-time'.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils have regular opportunities to write at length across a range of subjects and the curriculum is used as a context for inspiring pupils to continue to improve the quality of their writing
- there is targeted support to improve the quality of writing for disadvantaged pupils whose first language is English
- they continue with robust attendance action procedures to further reduce rates of absence and persistent absence.

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

Yours sincerely

Nicholas Cornell
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and your leadership team to discuss the school's effectiveness. Together, we visited lessons to observe pupils' learning, speak to pupils and look at their work. I also looked at a range of pupils' work in books. I met with the designated leaders for safeguarding, senior leaders and members of the governing body and spoke to a group of pupils about their school. I reviewed a range of the school's documentation, including school leaders' self-evaluation document, the school development plan, assessment information and safeguarding information.

I considered the views of 31 parents through the responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, as well as parents' written comments. I also spoke to a number of parents at the start of the day to gather their views about the school. I also considered the responses from the 24 members of staff who completed Ofsted's staff survey.