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Mrs Hannah Mansfield  
Executive Headteacher  
Whitley Village School  
Village Lane  
Lower Whitley  
Warrington  
Cheshire  
WA4 4QH

Dear Mrs Mansfield

### **Short inspection of Whitley Village School**

Following my visit to the school on 8 February 2017, 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 2013.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

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

There have been several changes in that time. Your school has become part of a 'hard' federation with a primary school in Ellesmere Port. Having been appointed deputy headteacher since the previous inspection, you then became executive headteacher of the federation in April 2016, following the previous headteacher's retirement. You are present in school on one day each week, but there is always one senior member of staff on the premises throughout the rest of the time.

You, your senior leaders and the governors are determined to provide your pupils with the tools to make increasingly strong progress. You have accurately selected areas for improvement, based on an analysis of the most recently published assessment information, and devised an appropriate action plan. Consequently, you have introduced strategies to secure better progress for identified groups, including the most able, in mathematics and writing. The increased emphasis on providing opportunities in mathematics to use reasoning skills and the introduction of a new scheme to improve writing are having a positive effect, as progress for current pupils in these subjects is good. However, you acknowledge that, in a few places in your school's development plan, you do not have precise success criteria that enable you to evaluate the impact of your actions on pupils' achievement. You also recognised that boys in Year 3 need to make even faster progress to enable them to

come closer to expected standards of attainment by the end of key stage 2.

Parents who expressed their opinions through 'Parent View', Ofsted's online survey, and in conversation with me were very supportive of you and your team. They appreciate the good communication systems that you have put in place and find the school's text messaging system helpful. They feel that their children are safe because you look after them well and teach them about how to manage risks, such as those presented by the internet. They are very positive about the 'fantastic range of after-school activities' you provide, such as football, fencing, theatre and gardening, and typically use complimentary descriptions, such as 'an all-round lovely school'.

You develop the spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of pupils' learning effectively. As well as the extra-curricular clubs, you provide other activities, ranging from exploring Chinese New Year to working with visiting artists in school. You also promote fundamental British values well, through curriculum subjects, such as religious education, and through a planned series of assemblies and discussions around each of the values. You give older pupils a sense of responsibility with your 'buddies' system between Year 6 and Reception children. As a result of all these strategies, you prepare your pupils well for life in modern Britain.

Pupils are enthusiastic and articulate, showing strongly positive attitudes to their learning. Their behaviour in class is very good, with no disruptions causing loss of learning time.

At the previous inspection, your area for improvement was to make achievement outstanding by making more teaching outstanding. Although the school is not yet outstanding, you have taken actions that are producing good progress for your pupils. There is now clear matching of work to pupils' abilities, especially in mathematics, including challenge for the most able. There is a good number of opportunities to develop problem-solving and reasoning skills in mathematics, and your recently revised marking policy gives clear indications to pupils of how they can improve their work.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. You make good use of the family liaison officers, who are employed across both schools in the federation, to provide support to you as the school's designated safeguarding lead. On the rare occasions when they are needed, they are available to contact parents or social care if there are any concerns about pupils.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. This is because you and your staff know your pupils well and you are knowledgeable about how to keep them safe. Pupils feel safe in school and can explain how to stay safe. They trust the adults in school to be able to help them effectively if they have any concerns.

## Inspection findings

- I explored a number of key lines of enquiry during the inspection and I have reported on some of these elsewhere in this letter. You have continued to benefit from working with your partner school through the federation. You are able to share resources, such as the family liaison officers, who support pupils' welfare and safeguarding effectively, and the speech therapist who provides effective support to the substantial number of pupils with speech and language needs. You also share expertise and arrange joint training, such as that provided for the new writing project that you have introduced. These actions have resulted in continued improvements in teaching and the good progress that current pupils make.
- Pupils are making good progress in writing in key stage 1. They progress from writing simple sentences to more complex ones for their age and stage of development, such as 'I am writing to tell you I am very sorry'. I also noticed that pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported and their progress from their starting points is good. In Year 4, for example, they can now write sentences involving subordinate clauses.
- In mathematics in key stage 1, pupils are making good progress. They acquire knowledge skills and understanding, moving from simple counting in fives to solving problems involving addition and subtraction. There are regular opportunities to use their reasoning skills and teachers provide appropriate challenge for the most able.
- The boys who are currently in Year 3 make good progress, considering their low achievement at the end of Year 2. Those who do not have special educational needs and/or disabilities are quickly acquiring the appropriate knowledge, understanding and skills for their age in writing and can now write sentences with some complexity, such as 'we work so extremely hard that our hands ache'.
- In mathematics, pupils currently in Year 3 are making good progress from low achievement at the end of key stage 1. They advance from counting in steps of 50 to using formal methods to add and subtract three-digit numbers. Teachers provide work that is well matched to their abilities. The school's own assessment information also shows improvement in mathematics and writing progress for this year group. However, you agreed that the boys need make even faster progress to be sure they are close to national averages by the end of Year 6.
- The teaching of phonics in Year 2 is effective and pupils acquire the phonics skills they need to become confident readers. Pupils show good attitudes to learning and staff's expectations of behaviour are high. However, there are a few inconsistencies, such as when staff do not challenge pupils when they mispronounce letter sounds, or when they do not teach in a multi-sensory way.

## Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they embed the recent strategies in the teaching of writing and mathematics to secure progress that is consistently above average
- the teaching of phonics, particularly in Year 2, regularly involves checking for

accurate pronunciation of letter sounds and making use of a range of pupils' senses

- they evaluate the impact on pupils' achievement of all actions in the school's improvement plans.

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

Yours sincerely

Mark Quinn  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

I carried out short visits to all year groups, including the early years, which were joint activities with you. I scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation summary, action plans for school improvement, records of the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning, minutes of meetings of the governing body and records connected with the safeguarding of children. I held discussions and conversations with members of staff, governors, parents and pupils. I also had discussions with a representative from the local authority. I listened to pupils read and analysed pupils' work. I evaluated eight responses received through 'Parent View', Ofsted's online survey. During my preparation for the inspection, I also evaluated 36 responses to 'Parent View', which had been received since September 2016. Furthermore, I analysed 14 responses to the staff questionnaire and 52 responses to the pupil questionnaire.