

19 March 2018

Miss Roz Burch
Headteacher
Widmer End Combined School
Estcourt Drive
Widmer End
High Wycombe
Buckinghamshire
HP15 6AH

Dear Miss Burch

Short inspection of Widmer End Combined School

Following my visit to the school on 7 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 your school was judged to be good in March 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have an aspirational vision for pupils to achieve well and develop a lifelong love of learning. Your nurturing approach is well respected by staff, governors, parents and carers. A parent summed this up, saying, 'This is a friendly, caring school, clearly focused on learning but also caring for pupils' individual needs.'

You know the school and pupils well. You know what is working effectively and where further improvements can be achieved. Your forward-thinking approach is bringing about sustainable improvement. You swiftly spotted when pupils' progress dipped after the last inspection, and have taken effective action to get this back on track. As a result, the standards that pupils achieve continue to improve.

Pupils relish their many opportunities to contribute to school and community life. They enjoy being librarians or helping to keep the school grounds tidy, for example. Pupils enthusiastically discussed their fund-raising project to help local elderly people. Pupils are helped to learn to become responsible and caring citizens.

Governors are knowledgeable and ambitious for the school. They keep their skills up to date by attending helpful training. Governors hold leaders to account and check what you tell them through regular visits to the school and careful scrutiny of reports. This effective approach is successfully contributing to the school's development.

Pupils behave well in lessons and move around the school in a calm and orderly fashion. Pupils play happily on the playground and look out for anyone without a friend to join their games. Lessons are calm and purposeful. Pupils listen attentively to teachers' instructions and promptly get started on their work because activities are engaging. Parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, are supportive of the school. Many parents praised the friendly, welcoming and nurturing ethos. A parent commented, 'I couldn't be happier with Widmer End.'

At the time of the last inspection, you were asked to ensure that pupils were interested in their learning and that the most able pupils were challenged to make quicker rates of progress. You were also asked to ensure that teaching expertise is shared between staff, and that the achievement of the most able pupils is more thoroughly tracked.

You have developed an interesting and stimulating curriculum. Your capable middle leaders know their subject areas well and confidently share their knowledge with their colleagues. The success of this approach can be seen in pupils' eagerness to learn and the good standard of work they produce.

You carefully analyse the progress of all pupils. As a result, you and your governors promptly identified the previous dip, and know that some pupils could still achieve more, particularly in writing and mathematics. Helpful training is enabling staff to provide pupils with greater challenge. Your well-informed and ambitious approach makes you well placed to drive further improvements.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Leaders ensure that checks on staff are completed thoroughly before they start work. Staff know pupils well and make effective use of their training to monitor pupils' welfare and diligently report any concerns. Leaders respond swiftly and work with parents and other agencies to keep pupils safe.

Governors understand their responsibilities to keep pupils safe. Governors are knowledgeable about potential risks to pupils. They regularly evaluate the school's procedures, taking prompt action when changes are needed.

Pupils say that they feel safe at school. They know that they can talk to staff if they have any worries. Pupils talk confidently about keeping themselves safe online. They know not to share their personal information on the internet. Pupils said that they receive regular helpful reminders from staff to keep themselves safe online.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection, we looked at specific aspects of the school's provision: the effectiveness of leaders' work to improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils;

how well teaching supports the most able pupils to achieve the higher standards in writing; and how well pupils, overall, are supported to make good progress.

- Leaders' careful checks on attendance help them to support individual pupils and their families effectively, as soon as any problems arise. Leaders work closely with parents to agree and implement the right support. As a result, disadvantaged pupils attend school regularly and make strong progress in their learning.
- Across the school, teachers provide interesting activities that stimulate pupils' writing. Pupils enjoy writing for many different purposes. Teachers encourage pupils consistently to evaluate and improve their written work. As a result, pupils write confidently and often at length, increasingly achieving higher standards.
- Leaders and teachers keep a close watch on pupils' progress. Consequently, the right additional support or challenge is provided as soon as this is needed. Helpful training is strengthening teachers' subject knowledge. This positive approach is successfully boosting pupils' learning, particularly in writing and mathematics. Leaders are rightly committed to continue this work until standards are consistently excellent, for all pupils in all subjects.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils throughout the school make consistently strong progress from their starting points, in all subjects, so that they regularly achieve the highest possible standards.

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

Yours sincerely

Claire Prince
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and your governors. I also spoke to a representative from Buckinghamshire Learning Trust. Together, you and I visited classes in all year groups. I considered the 66 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 42 free-text comments. There were 74 responses to Ofsted's online survey for pupils, which were also taken into account, together with 23 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire. I met with a small group of pupils and scrutinised work in pupils' books. I also analysed a range of the school's documentation, including information about safeguarding. We discussed your evaluation of the schools' effectiveness.