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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mrs Katie Dickens
Executive Headteacher
Stockcross C.E. School
Chapel Road
Stockcross
Newbury
Berkshire
RG20 8LD

Dear Mrs Dickens

Short inspection of Stockcross C.E. School

Following my visit to the school on 21 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 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since your appointment as executive headteacher in September 2015 you have developed a strong and motivated staff team who work together well to enrich pupils' learning. Your accurate evaluation of the school's effectiveness shows that you know which aspects of the school will benefit from further improvement. The school development plan addresses these robustly. As a result, the school is well placed to continue to improve. Your ambition for Stockcross, and the partnership you are building with another local school, are driving improvement. You ensure that by the end of key stage 2 pupils meet their potential and leave the school ready and enthusiastic for the next stage of education.

Parents describe the school as a 'lovely community school'. They comment enthusiastically on the opportunities that Stockcross offers for extra-curricular activities, including a wide variety of clubs and music lessons. Pupils are excited when talking about their learning and speak with pride about the responsibilities they have been given, including being sports captains and school council members. Those appointed to run the school's bank, in partnership with a local building society, speak knowledgeably about how they can help others and the training they have received. In classrooms, pupils concentrate and work hard. They are keen to talk about their learning and are proud of their achievements. Pupils in different classes were keen to show me the boats they were making, the mathematics

theories they were testing about parallel lines and angles, and their best writing. They are supportive of each other's learning, helping their friends to improve by discussing their work together.

At the time of the previous inspection, leaders were asked to raise the standard of teaching and achievement to outstanding. At the end of key stage 2 in 2016, the progress pupils made in reading, writing and mathematics was equal to or above that seen nationally and attainment was broadly average. However, in 2016, too few pupils in key stage 1 met the expected standard for their age in writing. You and other leaders took swift action to recover these standards. You ensure that information about pupils' performance is checked regularly and used by leaders and staff to decide pupils' next steps. Helpfully, leaders work with another local school and the local authority to check the accuracy of teachers' assessments of pupils' learning. Current records are an accurate reflection of pupils' achievements. Current information shows that pupils in key stage 1 are beginning to catch up with age-related expectations for their writing.

The previous inspection report recommended that the purpose and range of outside activities planned for children in the early years was increased. During my visit, I saw children in the early years learning independently through a wide range of activities, both in the classroom and outside. The early years leader ensures that children benefit from an intense period of time concentrating on communication and personal, social and emotional development. This takes place as soon as they join the school and prepares them well for developing reading, writing and mathematical skills. In key stage 1, pupils are building well on the solid foundation of knowledge and skills they developed in the early years. Consequently, more pupils are on track to reach the expectations for their age. However, the most able are not always challenged fully in writing.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders make sure that all safeguarding processes are fit for purpose and up to date. Administrative staff are proactive in ensuring that all adults in the school are aware of safeguarding policies and practices. A well-managed training programme ensures that all staff and volunteers are kept up to date with the latest guidance. All appropriate employment checks are completed and clearly recorded.

The designated safeguarding leaders work closely with other agencies to ensure that pupils are safe and families are supported in an appropriate and sensitive manner. Comprehensive records are kept of this work. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe and posters around the school remind them whom they can talk with if they have a concern. Responding to the pupils' survey, all key stage 2 pupils said they knew whom to speak to if something was worrying them. The work of the emotional literacy support assistant supports pupils with specific issues well.

Attendance is good for all pupils and is well above the national average. This is because effective processes ensure that pupils' absence is investigated thoroughly and lateness is recorded and followed up by staff. Pupils report that they enjoy

school, feel safe and are encouraged to look after their own health and well-being.

Inspection findings

- Leaders have a good understanding of the strengths of the school and the priorities for improvement. Secure processes and strategies are in place to monitor pupils' progress and ensure the best outcomes for all groups of pupils. However, leaders do not always fully evaluate the impact of interventions on the progress and attainment of pupils for whom these are provided.
- The leadership team has recognised and begun to address successfully the dip in English standards at the end of key stage 1 in 2016. Focused teaching and feedback with clear identification of next steps in learning is already beginning to speed up the progress of these pupils. Pupils are now working at age-related expectations or catching up rapidly. However, some of the most able pupils currently in key stage 1 are making slower progress than their peers, because teachers do not reliably plan writing tasks that offer sufficient challenge.
- Children in early years choose activities with confidence and enthusiasm. The environment, both indoors and outdoors, is well arranged and resources are easily accessible. For example, girls and boys enjoyed making boats from various materials and enthusiastically explored floating and sinking. The children's learning journals show children participating in a wide range of activities. Precise observations made by the members of the early years staff team celebrate achievement and support future learning well. Carefully planned activities and resources incorporate the right opportunities for children to tackle the next steps in learning.
- The leadership team have supported teachers to improve the teaching of phonics through effective training. As a result, most key stage 1 pupils who did not reach the required phonics standard at the end of Year 1 catch up by the end of Year 2. Reading is promoted well across the school. Pupils enjoy being read to and talk about how their teachers' enthusiastic reading makes them want to read more. In early years, frequent reading is encouraged at school and home and recorded carefully. Helpfully, volunteers regularly visit the school to support reading. Assessment information, checked with other schools for accuracy, shows an improvement in pupils' rates of progress in reading.
- The whole-school focus on handwriting and presentation is having a positive impact on pupils' progress. Some pupils have made rapid progress in these areas and pupils' workbooks reflect the care and thought that pupils put into their writing. Displays of pupils' writing in classrooms, and the 'big books' pupils have made, show a range of well-presented, good-quality writing of different kinds.
- Older pupils in the school show a mature approach to learning and problem-solving. For example, in a mathematics lesson seen during the inspection, pupils animatedly discussed ideas and solutions to various angle problems. They selected a range of appropriate resources to support themselves and were keen to succeed as a group. Activities, and effective additional adult support, are focused accurately on the needs of pupils, helping them to be successful.
- Governors are enthusiastic and ambitious for the school's success. They are keen

to play their part and have welcomed the firm leadership and decisive actions of the current executive headteacher. Governors have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and can identify where pupil attainment is below national averages. They regularly visit the school but the information governors gather is not always compiled and evaluated systematically. Governors are aware of interventions and changes made to improve pupils' achievement but do not rigorously evaluate the impact of these in order to hold leaders to account for their success.

- Valuable additional opportunities are offered to disadvantaged pupils, including music lessons and support with reading, handwriting and spelling. An effective emotional literacy support assistant and family support worker ably assist some children and their families. Leaders ensure that the additional pupil premium funding is used effectively to support disadvantaged pupils to make similar progress to their peers.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they rigorously monitor assessment information and use this analysis efficiently to evaluate how well interventions and changes to teaching improve pupils' progress and attainment
- the most able pupils in key stage 1 are given further opportunities to work at a greater depth in writing.

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

Yours sincerely

Tracy Good
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, other staff with significant responsibilities and five governors, including the chair of the governing body. I took account of the 30 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's confidential online survey, and comments from the parents on arrival at the start of the day. I spoke to a small group of pupils before school and took account of the 53 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey completed by pupils in key stage 2. I visited lessons in all classes, jointly with the executive headteacher, and we scrutinised pupils' work together. I analysed a range of school documentation about pupils' achievement, leaders' evaluation of the school's effectiveness, the school development plan, safeguarding checks, policies and procedures.