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20 March 2018

Mrs Amrit Bal-Richards  
Headteacher  
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Hertfordshire  
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Dear Mrs Bal-Richards

### **Short inspection of Chater Infant 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 the school was judged to be good in June 2014.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in certain areas. This may indicate that the school is improving towards being outstanding. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

You and your very able leadership team have ensured that all areas for improvement identified at the time of the previous inspection have been addressed. The improvements in outcomes achieved at the end of the early years and key stage 1 have been maintained and built upon. There have been many changes since the previous inspection. The school appointed your deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher in 2015 and, in so doing, you have strengthened and stabilised the leadership of the school. Quickly, you set about identifying how you could make further improvements to make the school even better. Since this time, you and your team have worked tirelessly and with great passion to provide very effective and purposeful leadership. The governing body complement has also changed considerably in the last three years. The chair and vice-chair are new to their roles, as are a number of other governors. However, they are using their skills and expertise well to challenge and support the school to ensure continual and sustained improvement.

Parents, pupils and staff are very appreciative of the work that leaders do at the school. Comments from parent who responded by text to Ofsted's online survey,

Parent View, are many and effusive in their praise. Such comments include: 'The school is just a blessing for the area we live in and I am utterly happy!' and 'I feel this is a fantastic school. My son enjoys coming and is always encouraged and supported to be the best he can be.' Children are equally praising of their 'fun, fantastic, wonderful school'. They particularly enjoy all of the trips they go on and the many visitors who come to the school. This is the key to your new curriculum. You are committed to ensuring that children have experiences that they might not otherwise get, be they visits to the local park, the zoo or local museums. Almost every wall throughout the school has high-quality displays evidencing both the quality of children's work and the variety and richness of opportunities that you offer them.

Collectively you, your committed staff, governors, parents and pupils have created a culture in which everyone is involved in continually reviewing and improving the opportunities for your pupils. Your passion, in particular, is palpable, and well demonstrated in your statement, 'These children only get the one chance at this and we are going to get it right!' The appointment of the parent liaison support leader has had considerable impact on the strengthening of relationships with parents and carers. Every effort is made to include parents in the life of the school and to guide them in how best to support their children's education. Coffee mornings, workshops and fundraising events are very much welcomed by parents and pupils alike.

At your previous inspection, you were asked to improve the outcomes at the end of Reception, accelerate pupils' progress in writing and ensure the effective use of learning support assistants. Working with your staff you have agreed and put in place effective systems to check the quality of teaching. You have also ensured that all teachers and learning support assistants have access to high-quality training and professional development. Teachers deploy learning support assistants very effectively in and outside of the classroom. Disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are very effectively supported, ensuring that they make strong progress.

The considerable work that has been put into developing children's and pupils' phonics skills is paying dividends. You have provided good-quality training following the introduction of your new phonics teaching scheme, the result of which is that adults provide consistently effective learning for children and pupils, many of whom speak English as an additional language. Parents have welcomed the opportunity to learn more about phonics teaching and, from the very youngest children to those in Year 2, parents are very supportive of the regular practice that is needed for the vast majority of children and pupils. Consequently, children in the early years use their phonic skills well in early reading and writing. This is then built upon very effectively throughout key stage 1, resulting in strong outcomes in reading and writing. The quality of writing we saw was impressive. Teachers provide many and regular opportunities for pupils to write at length and in a variety of genres, not just in English lessons, but in other subjects like history, geography and science.

You have high expectations of all of your staff. You have put in place clear guidance

and support to ensure that teaching is the best it can be and children and pupils make the best progress they can. Tracking of pupils' progress and attainment is comprehensive and highlights at regular pupil progress meetings where there are emerging gaps or where any individual pupil is at risk of not achieving what they should. Monitoring of teaching and learning is regular and informs training and support for teachers. Learning support assistants work well with teachers to ensure that they effectively support children and pupils. We saw many examples of this, both in the classroom and outside of the classroom, where learning support assistants worked with individuals or groups of pupils. Pupils worked well independently and as a group, tackling work that was sometimes very challenging for them. However, although the proportion of pupils achieving greater depth at the end of key stage 1 has risen since the previous inspection, you are aware that this area is still 'a work in progress'.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Arrangements for all aspects of safeguarding are very effective. Leaders, including governors, have ensured that there is a strong culture of safeguarding at Chater Infant School. You are tenacious in following up with external agencies any concerns you may have about children in your care. Procedures for checking the suitability of new members of staff to work with children are well maintained and checked by both you and governors. Training records show when an update is required for each member of staff. Consequently, all are up to date on procedures for keeping children safe and know what to do if there are any concerns.

Pupils told me that they feel safe in their 'special school'. Parents agreed that their children are kept safe and well cared for, saying that, 'The school takes great care to ensure that it embraces inclusion for all children, regardless of background.' Pupils know what bullying is and what to do if they have any concerns. They are confident that staff will deal with any concerns that they may have. The school provides regular lessons about online safety and sends reminders through newsletters for both pupils and parents, or during workshops.

Leaders recognise the importance of regular and punctual attendance. Procedures are effective in ensuring that the vast majority of pupils attend school regularly and parents recognise the impact that absence has on pupils' achievement. However, this is still an area that the school raises as a high priority and will continue to do so.

### **Inspection findings**

- My first line of enquiry agreed with the school related to how well the school ensures that children get the best possible start to the education in the early years. This was because, for some years, the outcomes at the end of Reception have been below average.
- Children enter the Nursery often having had little or no pre-school experience. The proportion of children whose first language is not English is extremely high. This year, for example, it is 90%.

- By the time children leave the Nursery, they have made considerable progress from their low starting points. However, they enter the Reception Year with skills and abilities that are still below those typically seen in children of a similar age. Although the majority of children come from your Nursery, there is a proportion of children who join you in the Reception Year having had little or no pre-school experience.
- The proportion of children who leave the Reception Year having achieved a good level of development has risen year on year since the previous inspection. In 2017, although below average, the proportion was 50%.
- The progress of the vast majority of children, including those who have SEN and/or disabilities and those who are disadvantaged, is very strong. That is because teaching and leadership in the early years are highly effective.
- Children are confident, happy and excited by the learning environment and the many experiences they have in the early years. Parents are very supportive of their children's learning and many share 'wow moments' with you.
- Evidence seen in learning journeys, lessons and in work on displays shows the huge strides that all children have made since joining Chater Infant School.
- My second line of enquiry related to how well learning supports the few disadvantaged children and pupils, and those who are the most able, to achieve as well as they can. This was because the proportion of disadvantaged pupils who attained as well as others nationally was below average, as was the proportion of pupils who achieved greater depth in their learning.
- Much has been done to ensure that the curriculum meets the needs of the children and pupils in your community. Teachers are well supported to ensure that every pupil is supported to achieve well and to be able to challenge themselves to do even harder work.
- Evidence in lessons, when talking to pupils and in the books is compelling. Teachers ensure that they regularly check on pupils' understanding and quickly address any misconceptions through, for example, probing questions.
- In all lessons we saw, and those that you have monitored over time, learning support assistants play a considerable part in supporting children and pupils. For example, we saw particularly effective practice in the teaching of phonics.
- Displays and work in pupils' books shows that their achievement towards age-related expectations has improved rapidly and consistently. The progress of many pupils in their books is extremely strong. We saw numerous examples of pupils' recent work which demonstrated skills and abilities above those expected for their age.
- However, pupils say that they welcome challenge and would like to be given even harder work in, for example, reading and mathematics. You are keen to capitalise on pupils' enthusiasm for learning, something you have worked extremely hard with your team to engender in all pupils.
- My final line of enquiry related to absence and persistent absence. This was because the absence and persistent absence of some groups of pupils, including those who have SEN, or whose first language is not English, are higher than

those of other pupils nationally.

- There are many reasons why persistent absence is high, which we discussed in detail. Your procedures to ensure that children and pupils are safe and attend school as regularly as they should are comprehensive and well carried out by your office staff.
- You will not authorise holidays for any pupils. Newsletters constantly remind parents of the importance of regular attendance. The work of office staff and the parent liaison support leader with families is considerable and much appreciated by parents.
- Your governors support the work that leaders do in this area, and have made regular checking on absence procedures a high priority. Consequently, the vast majority of pupils attend regularly and on time.
- You and your governors continue to raise the profile of regular attendance and have rightly given it the importance it requires on your plans for improvement.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the proportion of children who achieve a good level of development at the end of Reception continues to increase
- the most able children and pupils are given work that consistently challenges them to achieve the best they can
- absence and persistent absence of a minority of pupils continue to be reduced so that attendance is at least average.

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

Yours sincerely

Ruth Brock  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

I met with you, your senior leaders, members of your office staff, a group of governors and some pupils. Together with you, I observed learning in the majority of classes, talked to pupils during lessons and looked at the work in their English books. I had a telephone conversation with the chair of the governing body and your school improvement partner. Your deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher and I scrutinised work in pupils' English and topic books and children's learning journeys. I took into account the 23 questionnaire responses from staff, and those by parents to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including many texts. I

scrutinised safeguarding policies and practice, including systems for safe recruitment of staff. I considered the school's own evaluation of its work, plans for improvement, monitoring of teaching and learning, documents related to the curriculum and performance management information.