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10 April 2018

Mrs Michaela Long
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Long

Short inspection of Christ Church CofE Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 22 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 September 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You, your deputy headteachers and governors provide effective leadership and have formed positive relationships with families and the local community. Most parents and carers who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as those I spoke with, paid tribute to the work and commitment of your staff team. For example, summing up the views of most parents, one stated, 'It's a great school. Everyone really cares about the children.' I could also see that the charity-funded community hub based at your school, 'Single Point Plus', offers effective wrap-around care during school and holiday times for pupils and families in the local area. The combined efforts of staff at the school and hub make a strong contribution to pupils' personal and social development, particularly those whose circumstances make them vulnerable or disadvantaged.

The staff value pupils' work and efforts. This is evident in the range of work we looked at in pupils' books and on displays portraying the best examples of pupils' achievements. Pupils' high-quality paintings, portraits and work about famous or courageous people are displayed in corridors and stairwells. These reflect very well the pupils' appreciation and understanding of the contribution historic figures made to society. For example, beautifully created portraits of Elizabeth Fry and more recent portrayals of courageous figures such as the youngest Nobel Prize laureate Malala Yousafzai are celebrated as excellent examples of ambition and the human spirit in the face of adversity. The work in pupils' topic books and special projects involving a range of educational visits to local places of interest, such as the Black Country Museum, engage pupils and develop their interest in and curiosity about

history, science and geography. You and your staff have been successful in maintaining a stimulating curriculum which promotes British values of tolerance, respect and care. In addition, the school's Christian ethos and inclusive values are having a very positive impact on pupils' academic and personal development as well as their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

As you know, I shared with you and school leaders some lines of enquiry for this short inspection. In addition, the previous inspection in September 2013 highlighted some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and its impact on pupils' learning. Your own evaluations and those of other leaders and governors are accurate. You recognise that the overall quality of teaching remains effective but that there are inconsistent expectations. The work in pupils' books, particularly their independent writing, show teachers' inconsistent expectations for work and progress.

The results of the staff survey show that the vast majority of teachers and support staff value and benefit from good-quality training, support and professional development. It is also the case that you and the two deputy headteachers skilfully oversee the performance of staff. Senior leaders and staff responsible for subjects or special educational needs (SEN) regularly assess pupils' work and progress. Accurate and accessible assessment information also provides staff with a clear picture of how much progress each pupil makes in reading, writing and mathematics. These assessments provide a strong basis for informing leaders' priorities for further improvement to teaching and learning.

Inspectors saw some particularly effective learning, for example in Reception and some Year 2 and Year 6 lessons, teachers offered pupils productive opportunities to talk about their learning and broaden their use of vocabulary. The work in pupils' books across the school shows that pupils make good progress over time, developing the form and structure of their handwriting, punctuation and spelling. However, as we saw during our visits to lessons, there are occasions when teachers ask questions but do not give pupils the opportunity to explain their answers fully in complete sentences. There are also some inconsistencies of practice across classes, where pupils produce irregular handwriting or untidy work. There is still scope to improve pupils' progress in writing, particularly for disadvantaged pupils in key stage 1, as assessments show that they make relatively slower progress compared with reading and mathematics. Last year's national assessment results show that pupils make good progress overall in relation to their starting points. However, there is still potential for teachers to tailor their teaching more to the needs of the most able pupils, as test results show that some could be doing even better, particularly in writing.

The school has maintained good provision for children in the early years. You and the governors have also extended this by managing two-year-old provision. The progress evident in the children's 'learning journeys' (written and pictorial examples of their assessments, work and progress over time) shows that children do well, and particularly in their development of speech and language. The small number of children in the early years and pupils across the school in the early stages of learning English make rapid progress. The provision for pupils who have SEN and/or

disabilities, particularly focusing on providing for pupils who have autism, remains strong. I can see that this provision is managed and staffed by a very skilled and well-qualified team of adults.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and robust. Staff vetting procedures include systematic checks on visitors, volunteers, governors and supply staff. The indoor and outdoor areas, including an excellent range of stimulating resources and areas available for early years children, are clean, safe and secure. All the early years welfare requirements comply with statutory requirements. The provision for two- and three-year-olds, as well as four- and five-year-old children in the Reception Year, is expertly managed by a dedicated and well-qualified early years team. Even though the Nursery children and two-year-olds were out of school visiting the Safari Park during the inspection, I was very impressed with the safe and stimulating environment the children experience at school. I could also see how staff in the Nursery take great care to make sure that indoor and outdoor areas are secure and that proper checks are made when visitors or parents visit.

Pupils know what to do to keep themselves safe when using the internet or mobile devices. You and the governors make sure that staff are fully aware of their roles and responsibilities by making sure that safeguarding and child protection training is carried out systematically. As you know, I checked the school's attendance procedures and the measures you and your staff adopt to deal with irregular attendance or persistent absenteeism. You and the staff team manage this well. The community hub, 'Single Point Plus', which is based at your school, is used very effectively by a committed and dedicated staff team that works closely with vulnerable families, including those who are hard to reach. I know that leaders, staff and governors are determined to continue reducing persistent absenteeism as an urgent priority. The vast majority of pupils attend school regularly and on time. You and the staff team go the extra mile to make sure that pupils are safe if not attending school by carrying out home visits and regularly keeping in touch with families. The vast majority of parents rightly believe that pupils are safe and secure in school.

Inspection findings

- You and your deputy headteachers have adopted a range of strategies to improve teaching. There is also good potential to continue utilising the most effective teachers so that staff can see and share best practice.
- There is good oversight of teachers' performance and you recognise that there is still scope to improve teaching further, especially by ensuring that the work provided for pupils meets their learning needs and extends their learning further.
- I agree with leaders' evaluations that some of the teaching does not set high enough expectations. This is particularly important for the most able pupils, as assessments show that some could be doing even better, particularly in writing.
- The large majority of children join the school in the Nursery or Reception classes

with skills and abilities that are well below those typical of their ages. They make good progress, as the majority reach a good level of development by the end of Reception. There is scope now to build on this good start to increase the proportion of pupils reaching or exceeding age-related standards by the end of key stage 1.

- National assessments results show that pupils make good progress over time in reading, writing and mathematics in all three key stages. There are relative weaknesses, however, as pupils make slower progress in writing in key stage 1 compared with reading and mathematics.
- I can see why there is this delayed progress in writing in key stage 1. A large number of pupils start school with low levels of speech, language and communication. The school's focus on providing regular speech and language support in the early years and key stage 1 is effective. Pupils who have additional speech and language needs are being served well. The additional investment of pupil premium funding to provide weekly speech and language therapy, as well as a range of support and interventions for disadvantaged pupils, is effective. This must continue to close further the gaps between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and others, in key stage 1 particularly.
- The most recent assessments of pupils' progress in key stage 1 show that increasingly more pupils are reaching the required standard in phonics in Years 1 and 2. The broad range of interventions and support provided are having the desired effect and must continue.
- Pupils enjoy school and wear their smart school uniform with pride. They are courteous and well behaved. I saw how happy pupils were as they arrived at school in the morning, keen to meet their friends and ready for the challenges ahead. As one group of pupils told me, 'This is a very caring and friendly school.'
- Your school accommodates the needs of many vulnerable and disadvantaged pupils and their families. The community hub does a great deal of work during each school term and during holiday periods to work with families and to ensure that pupils are safe when not in school. We discussed some of the reasons for last year's high levels of persistent absenteeism. At first glance, the figures for 2017 looked untypical because in previous years persistent absence rates were well below national figures.
- The work and commitment you and your staff team put into working with the local community is commendable and, as was confirmed by most parents I spoke with, you all go above and beyond expectations to ensure that pupils and families are safe. The strong relationships you have established with families provide secure foundations for ensuring that pupils are safe when not attending school. This work must continue to ensure that overall attendance rates edge even closer to national figures, particularly focusing on reducing persistent absence.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- sustain improvements to teaching and learning across the school by:
 - making sure that in all classes teachers have high expectations for work, presentation and pupils' progress
 - building on the strongest features of teaching and enabling staff to see and share more best practice
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to explain their answers fully when answering questions and time to show what they have learned
 - providing more extension tasks and challenge for the most capable pupils to help them learn in greater depth and reach even higher standards
- continue improving the teaching of writing in key stage 1 and reducing the difference between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils
- build on the work being done with parents and families to reduce persistent absenteeism and bring overall attendance rates more in line with national figures.

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

Yours sincerely

Charalambos Loizou
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, the two deputy headteachers and the teacher responsible for SEN provision regularly throughout the day's inspection. I also met with the chair and two members of the governing body. Together with you and the deputy headteachers, I visited classes to observe some teaching, look at pupils' work in books and to speak to pupils during lessons. I also spoke with pupils during breaktime and lunchtime. I spoke to some parents at the start of the school day and considered the 13 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. I analysed the 15 responses to the online Ofsted survey from school staff. I scrutinised the school's improvement and action plans and leaders' own evaluations of the school's work. We discussed and checked monitoring files and assessments of pupils' work and progress and I considered recent external reviews commissioned by Sandwell local authority's school improvement service. I met with a group of pupils from key stage 2 to discuss their work and progress, as well as their views about school. I checked staff vetting and safeguarding procedures to determine whether the school's arrangements for safeguarding are effective.