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Mrs Amanda Delbridge
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Delbridge

Short inspection of Croft Junior School

Following my visit to the school on 13 November 2018 with Rob Hackfath HMI, 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 2014.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

Since the last inspection there have been a high number of changes to staffing, including several teachers and members of the leadership team. You were appointed as headteacher in September 2017. Since taking up the post your focus has been on improving the quality of teaching throughout the school. You have revised the way reading and mathematics are taught. This includes some very recent changes to the approach that teachers take in teaching these subjects. While these priorities for improvement are appropriate, the changes are not yet fully embedded throughout the school. As a result, a number of pupils throughout the school are not making the progress needed to reach the standards of which they are capable.

Over the last two years, there has been a decline in pupils' progress in reading and mathematics. In 2017 and 2018 disadvantaged pupils made less progress than other pupils in reading, writing and mathematics. In 2018 the proportion of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, who achieved the nationally expected standard for their age at the end of key stage 2 was below the national average. Until last year there was a lack of clarification for teachers about pupils' starting points. This is because leaders used a mixture of different assessment information that did not present a precise picture of what pupils could already do.

You have introduced a new assessment system that includes more frequent checks on pupils' progress based on their attainment at the end of key stage 1. You have made it clear that teachers' expectations of what all pupils can do must be high.

Pupils are polite and welcoming to visitors. They are keen to talk about recent improvements to their school, including the updated library. Most pupils behave well. They understand the rules and associated rewards and consequences. However, last year the number of pupils who received one or more fixed-term exclusions was above the national average. Leaders confirm that there are plans in place to support pupils who need extra help to manage their behaviour. While these plans recognise the individual needs of each of the pupils, more work is required to reduce the number of fixed-term exclusions at the school.

Following the last inspection, leaders were asked to improve the quality of teaching by ensuring that the level of challenge is appropriate for the most and least able pupils. Teachers have good subject knowledge and they use this to plan lessons that are pitched appropriately for lower- and middle-attaining pupils. As a result, challenge for these pupils is sufficient. Pupils' books show that there is increasing evidence of challenge for the most able pupils in English and mathematics. Leaders were also asked to improve pupils' spelling. Leaders have taken effective action to address this, and most pupils are able to use their knowledge of spelling rules and patterns to spell words accurately.

The parents I spoke to during the inspection, and those who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, are positive about the work of the school. They appreciate the changes that you have made since becoming headteacher. They told me that they feel very welcome in the school and more involved in what their children are learning.

Governors understand the strengths and weaknesses of the school well. They are committed to improving pupils' achievement. Governors are regular visitors to the school; they find out for themselves about what leaders have told them. While governors do challenge leaders about the progress that pupils make, they have not made close enough checks on the impact of how leaders are using pupil premium funding to support disadvantaged pupils.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have ensured that arrangements for safeguarding are fit for purpose. Leaders and governors place a high priority on the safety and welfare of pupils. You ensure that all staff receive regular training and updates so that they are aware of their safeguarding responsibilities. As a result, staff understand and use clear systems and procedures to identify and report any concerns they have. Child protection records show that leaders are responsive to this information and ensure that extra support is provided for vulnerable pupils.

Pupils feel safe and secure at school. They can explain how the curriculum helps them to learn how to keep safe. For example, they know how to use the internet

safely and they are aware of the dangers that strangers can pose.

Inspection findings

- You have introduced a variety of initiatives to improve pupils' progress in reading and mathematics. The school's new assessment system has clarified the expectations of what pupils need to learn in each year group. Leaders have set aspirational targets for the end of the academic year. You have developed strong links with the local first school to ensure that teachers have the most accurate picture of what pupils already know and can do. Leaders carry out half-termly assessment meetings that focus on individual pupils, particularly those who are at risk of falling behind.
- You have provided pupils with a wider range of fiction and non-fiction books. This includes stories by a variety of authors and texts linked to topics being studied in all year groups. The well-stocked library is a welcoming, vibrant learning space that pupils visit regularly. In addition, leaders have provided a selection of e-books and pupils' interest in these texts has been high. Teachers provide daily opportunities for pupils to read and there are opportunities for pupils to apply their reading skills in topic lessons. Pupils told me that they are encouraged to read at home and that teachers check to see if they have. Pupils' English books show that the pitch of learning is appropriate for most pupils. However, in some classes, the tasks set for the most able pupils are not sufficiently challenging. As a result, this group of pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- Leaders carried out a review of how mathematics was being taught throughout the school. They identified that many pupils were unable to solve problems accurately because they did not have adequate mathematical reasoning skills and they did not understand the related subject-specific vocabulary. As a result, leaders have provided training for staff on developing pupils' reasoning skills. Pupils' books show that opportunities for pupils to explain and justify their answers are increasing. However, the most able pupils' books, including those who are disadvantaged, show that they are often expected to complete work that they find too easy before moving on to more difficult tasks.
- I wanted to find out about the impact that your use of pupil premium funding is having on improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. Leaders now make sure they have a good understanding of the barriers to learning faced by this group of pupils. They ensure that all teachers know who the disadvantaged pupils in their class are, and how to meet their specific needs. Currently, pupils' books show that there are no differences in teachers' expectations for disadvantaged and other pupils. In addition, a range of interventions is available to support pupils who are at risk of falling behind. However, leaders do not make enough checks on the impact of these interventions to enable them to evaluate how successful their actions are.
- My final line of enquiry was about provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). This is because in 2017 and 2018, these pupils made less progress than their peers in reading, writing and mathematics. Leaders maintain a clear focus on meeting the needs of individual pupils. They ensure that staff receive training that reflects the needs of pupils with SEND. In addition,

since the last inspection leaders have ensured that professional development for teaching assistants has been a priority. As a result, teaching assistants provide effective support in lessons and through additional interventions. Leaders track the impact of additional support but until very recently they have not compared the rates of progress made by pupils with SEND with those of their peers. Consequently, leaders had not identified the significant differences in the rates of progress that this group of pupils made.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they use pupils' achievement information to better inform their plans for improvement and to evaluate the impact of their work
- they monitor the effectiveness of the actions taken to improve pupils' outcomes more closely
- they are more rigorous in their evaluations of the impact of actions to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils, the most able pupils and those with SEND
- they review how they work with pupils whose behaviour causes concern, to reduce the number of fixed-term exclusions.

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

Yours sincerely

Jo Evans
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, the team met with you and other leaders. I met with parents and two governors and I spoke to a representative of the local authority on the telephone. We visited classrooms and looked at pupils' work together. Inspectors also met with two groups of pupils. The school's website and documents, including the single central record, child protection records, the school's self-evaluation, improvement plans, monitoring information and pupil-progress and assessment information, were reviewed. I took account of the 22 responses by parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire Parent View and 32 responses to the staff survey. There were no responses to the pupil questionnaire.