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26 February 2019

Mrs Sarah Massheder
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Massheder

Short inspection of Cross-in-Hand Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 7 February 2019, 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 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last 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 specific areas. This may indicate that the school has improved significantly overall. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection will be a section 5 inspection.

Leaders at the school have developed the positive learning environment that was identified in the previous report. Pupils thrive in an enriched learning community that stimulates their intellectual curiosity about the world, while strengthening their social and emotional development. As a result, pupils make strong progress in the development of their reading, writing and mathematics skills, knowledge and understanding. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the quality of education and feel that their children are very well cared for.

Through your unwavering focus on the further improvement of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, you have embedded a highly effective and engaging curriculum. Governors and staff share your vision for a school in which all pupils can excel academically and socially. Pupils are highly enthusiastic about learning and the benefits of the school. They told me that 'learning is great' and that 'English is amazing because we get to read such great books.' They added that they 'love maths because it's really challenging'.

Governance is strong at the school. Governors are both highly experienced and

knowledgeable. The governing body is well led and provides challenge and support in equal measure. Through their visits to the school and meetings with staff, governors gather pertinent information to challenge and celebrate the work of leaders.

Pupils' conduct in class and around the school is exemplary. They demonstrate high levels of empathy, kindness and respect for each other and visitors. Through the curriculum, pupils develop a very strong understanding of the importance of free speech, tolerance and democracy. Leaders have established highly effective approaches that enable and empower pupils to support each other both academically and socially. For example, Year 6 pupils, appointed as prefects, evaluate the learning environment in each classroom and staff act upon their views. Pupils are invested with leadership roles within the school, enabling them to collaborate with school leaders to enhance the quality of education. Pupils are trained as peer mediators, enabling them to resolve disputes and provide a listening ear to other pupils. Pupils are also trained as play leaders, which further enriches pupils' social and emotional experiences of school. Pupils spoke very positively about the roles of peer mediators and play leaders, saying that they help them to overcome difficulties and add to their enjoyment of school.

You correctly identify that teaching and learning in reading are a strength of the school. Across all year groups, pupils relish the challenges posed in English lessons. As a result, pupils have consistently made progress that is above average and attained above the national averages in reading, at key stages 1 and 2, for the past two years. Additionally, pupils' skilful analysis of texts supports their development as writers very well. Consequently, pupils at key 2 made progress that was well above the national average in 2017 and 2018. Additionally, pupils at key stage 1 attained well above the national average in 2017 and 2018.

Where improvement is required, you and your leadership team take well-informed and highly effective action. For example, your focus on improving mathematics resulted in attainment that was above the national average at both the expected standard and higher standard at the end of key stage 2 in 2018. Additionally, pupils' progress in mathematics by the end of key stage 2 was above the national average. However, you acknowledge that there are still areas for improvement. For example, your action plan identifies the need to increase the proportion of pupils who meet the expected standard in the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders, including governors, are tenacious about ensuring the physical and emotional safety of pupils at the school. Staff receive regular training to enable them to respond swiftly and appropriately to any safeguarding concerns. The designated safeguarding leads are vigilant about pupils who may be at risk and ensure that timely and appropriate support is provided.

Leaders, including governors, are meticulous in ensuring that safeguarding records are securely maintained and reviewed regularly. Leaders' checks on the suitability of

staff to work with pupils are recorded meticulously.

There is a very strong culture of safeguarding at the school. Pupils spoke positively about the ways in which staff cared for them and resolved issues. In the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, parents were unanimous in agreeing that their children feel safe at the school.

Inspection findings

- This inspection's first line of enquiry focused on how leaders ensure that boys make as much progress and attain as well as girls, across the curriculum. Although boys attain well and make consistently good progress at both key stage 1 and key stage 2, girls outperformed boys in writing and mathematics in 2018. The previous inspection report identified the importance of using questioning more effectively to deepen pupils' understanding. Leaders have worked exceptionally hard to ensure that boys and girls receive additional, highly targeted challenge across the curriculum. For example, I observed pupils in Years 5 and 6 respond with sophistication and insight to the questions posed by their teachers about the most appropriate language for an empathic response to the poem, 'The highwayman'. Inspection evidence demonstrated that boys write as eloquently and articulately as girls. Boys and girls write with informed consideration of language and sentence structure.
- The previous inspection report noted the importance of ensuring that tasks enable pupils to make rapid progress. Leaders and staff have worked hard to enable boys and girls to access the curriculum with equal success through well-structured activities in every subject. For example, pupils develop their reasoning skills very well in mathematics through a variety of tasks designed to strengthen their understanding and knowledge. As a result, inspection evidence demonstrates that boys make progress as rapidly as girls in every year group.
- In science, history, geography and religious education, boys and girls make strong progress in their understanding, skills and knowledge in both key stage 1 and key stage 2. Through well-planned sequences of lessons, pupils deepen their knowledge about a range of subjects. For example, I observed pupils in Years 3 and 4 extend their understanding of the role of shrines in Hinduism, by reflecting on their own lives and their role in Christianity. Boys' oral and written evaluations are as cogent and insightful as those produced by girls.
- The second key line of enquiry was about the quality of provision in the outdoor area in early years. This was identified as an area for improvement in the previous inspection report. Leaders and staff have focused clearly and intelligently on ensuring that the outdoor provision fosters children's enthusiasm for learning. The outdoor area is well equipped with activities and apparatus to develop children's skills. For example, children have opportunities to practise their letter formation and early writing skills using chalks, complementing their high-quality writing and phonics lessons. Children also use the outdoor area to explore the natural world, developing their understanding of the world around them. In addition, it enhances the many opportunities children have to extend their language and communication skills through immersion in imaginative play.

Consequently, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development is consistently above the national average.

- The third line of enquiry focused on how leaders ensure that pupils develop strong phonics skills by the end of Year 1. The proportion of pupils meeting the expected standard in the phonics screening check was just below the national average in 2018. Senior leaders, subject leaders and staff have worked hard to ensure that pupils make good progress and attain well in reading and writing, in key stage 1. However, pupils' understanding of how to apply their phonics skills when reading and writing is not as well developed. Inspection evidence demonstrates that pupils are very knowledgeable about how texts convey characters, settings and ideas. However, some pupils are not as confident in their understanding of letters and the sounds they represent. You acknowledge that this is an area for improvement and have prioritised it in your school development plan.
- The final line of enquiry focused on the school's work to ensure that pupils know how to keep themselves safe. Through the curriculum, pupils understand the potential dangers of the internet and how to keep safe online. There is a strong focus on pupils' mental well-being through assemblies and discussions. Leaders respond swiftly to the emotional and social needs of pupils through a range of interventions, such as counselling and play-based therapy, with impressive results. Pupils at Cross-in-Hand Church of England Primary School develop resilience, confidence and socially appropriate behaviours that enable them to access learning with success.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the teaching of phonics is further strengthened so that all pupils can achieve the expected standard in the phonics screening check.

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

Yours sincerely

Susan Aykin
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

For this inspection, I had meetings with you, other senior leaders, and middle leaders. I also met with four governors and spoke with a representative of the local authority. I spoke with pupils informally in classrooms and when walking around the school's site. I also met formally with a group of 20 pupils to gather their views about the school. I visited a range of lessons to look at pupils' learning across all phases and carried out a separate scrutiny of pupils' work.

Policies and procedures for the safeguarding of pupils were examined along with the record of recruitment checks carried out on all adults working at the school. A range of documentation was looked at, including: the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans; information relating to pupils' achievement, attendance and behaviour; the minutes of the governing body's meetings; and curriculum plans. I considered the views of 91 parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I also considered the views of 25 members of staff and 23 pupils who responded to Ofsted's online surveys.