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Mrs A Morley
Headteacher
Ickworth Park Primary School
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Dear Mrs Morley

Short inspection of Ickworth Park Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 17 November 2015, 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 November 2010.

This school continues to be good.

Along with other school leaders, you have ensured that the school continues to provide a good quality of education. At the previous inspection, inspectors identified many strengths. These included the teaching of literacy and numeracy, and the quality of the curriculum. These remain strengths and are reflected in the high standards that pupils have reached in the intervening years. Some weaknesses were identified at the previous inspection, including pupils' knowledge and understanding of other faiths and cultures. Inspectors also said that middle leaders were not sufficiently involved in evaluating the quality of teaching and learning in their subject areas. You have taken effective action to address both of these issues. You have used the introduction of the new National Curriculum to ensure that pupils spend time learning about different cultures, faiths and ways of life. Pupils now also study major world religions. Over the past six months, faith leaders representing Judaism, Hinduism and Buddhism have visited the school to speak to pupils about their religion. Middle leaders now play a more active role in checking the quality of work in their subject areas and leading improvements. They have been instrumental in making improvements to the curriculum. Pupils are now provided with opportunities to engage in a wide range of sporting activities and learn a number of musical instruments. Their involvement in the 'Food for Life' project, which recently led to a national award for the school, is also helping pupils to make informed choices about healthy eating and to learn about the importance of diet and exercise.

As a result of your work since the previous inspection:

- the school's curriculum has improved and high standards have been maintained
- there are good systems in place to check the quality of teaching and learning
- pupils enjoy learning and rarely miss a day at school
- parents, governors and members of staff continue to be supportive of the school.

You are ambitious for the school to continue to improve and recognise that further work is required before the school can be judged as outstanding. You have identified what needs to be done and are taking appropriate action to build on the solid foundations that have been established.

Safeguarding is effective.

School leaders, including governors, have ensured that there are clear and effective policies and procedures for safeguarding pupils. Staff have regular training, and the record-keeping relating to safeguarding matters is comprehensive and well organised. There are clear management responsibilities in relation to child protection, including a relevant designated member of senior staff and a link governor.

The school regularly monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of its procedures and updates policies when appropriate. Senior leaders make sure that appropriate checks are made on all adults who work regularly with pupils, and adults employed by the school are appropriately recruited and vetted. Arrangements for helping pupils to keep themselves safe and to deal sensibly with risk are good. For example, pupils know about the risks associated with the use of the internet.

Inspection findings

- Leadership at Ickworth Park remains good. Senior leaders have accurately evaluated the school's strengths and areas for development. Plans for further improvement are well focused to sustain and build on the firm foundations that have been laid, and for the school to move towards becoming a 4–11 primary school from September 2016.
- Pupils continue to achieve well. They make good progress in the early years and a higher than average percentage of children reach a good level of development at the end of the Reception class. Consistently good progress across Key Stage 1 means that achievement at the end of Year 2 has been significantly above the national average in all subjects for the past three years. The work seen in pupils' books in Key Stage 2 during this inspection indicates that these pupils are also making good progress and achieving well.

- The teaching of reading is a particular strength of the school. Pupils quickly develop into competent and confident readers. The percentage of pupils achieving the required standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check was well above the national average in both 2014 and 2015. Standards in reading at the end of Key Stage 1 are also high. During this inspection, Key Stage 2 pupils read confidently and fluently. Pupils said that they read regularly, using books from the school library and from home.
- Pupils make good progress in writing. Children are given regular opportunities to write during play activities in the early years and they are also taught to form letters correctly and use their knowledge of phonics when writing. This good start is built on in Key Stage 1 and regular opportunities are provided for pupils to write for different purposes in Key Stage 2. However, older pupils are not given enough opportunities to write at length, and this limits the progress that they make in some aspects of their work, such as building cohesion and links between paragraphs.
- The leadership of teaching, learning and assessment continues to be effective. You make regular checks on the work of teachers through observation of teaching and scrutiny of pupils' work and teachers' planning. Subject leaders are also involved in this process. You had already identified the issue relating to extended pieces of writing in Key Stage 2 and have plans to increase the challenge that teachers provide so that older pupils develop the ability to write in a well-structured and engaging manner.
- A particular strength of the school is the commitment that teachers show to encourage healthy lifestyles. This was acknowledged recently when the school received a national 'Food for Life' award in recognition of pupils' involvement in growing food at a local allotment and working with the school cook to adapt and improve the menu offered. Recent improvements made as a result of suggestions from pupils have included the addition of a daily salad bar. Pupils also regularly display and promote produce from the allotment during assemblies; a recent presentation on broccoli led to many children trying and enjoying this food for the first time.
- Pupils enjoy school and behave extremely well. Their levels of attendance are excellent. They help to keep their school neat and tidy and show pride in their uniform. Pupils are polite and friendly towards each other and respectful towards the adults who teach them. Pupils enjoy the extra responsibilities that they are given in school. For example, a group of pupils are employed as play leaders at dinnertime. They happily help to organise games and supervise younger pupils. Pupils on the school council recently led a consultation with their classmates which has led to improvements in the playground.
- Pupils' positive attitudes towards learning, as demonstrated by the way that they concentrate and work hard in lessons, are not always apparent in the work that they produce. Too often handwriting is untidy and work isn't presented neatly.

- Governors know the school well and take their responsibilities for the school seriously. They have ensured that robust procedures are in place for safeguarding pupils, and through their monitoring have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and the areas that need further improvement. They are fully supportive of the headteacher and share her ambition for the school.
- Parents are very supportive of the school, and a very large majority would recommend the school to another parent. One parent stated, 'It's a well-managed and friendly school. I wouldn't change anything'.
- Staff are fully supportive of the school's leadership team. All of those who responded to the survey said that they were proud to be a member of staff at the school. One member of staff stated, 'I love coming to work each day. I feel well supported by all the staff. We work closely together to ensure that all the children succeed'.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- pupils in Key Stage 2 are given more opportunities to write at length, in both English and other subject areas
- pupils always present their work neatly and legibly.

Yours sincerely

Paul Tomkow

Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection I met with you, three members of the governing body and members of the school's teaching staff. I spoke to a representative of the local authority on the telephone. I looked at the work that pupils had completed in their books this year and together, we observed teaching in five lessons. I also listened to pupils reading and I met with the school council to talk about their reading books. I looked closely at the school's safeguarding and child protection arrangements and scrutinised the single central record. I looked at the school's self-evaluation and the current improvement plan. I also looked at information about pupils' attendance, behaviour and welfare. I considered the views of the 68 parents who had responded to Parent View, analysed 20 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and looked at the 96 responses to the pupil questionnaire.