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10 February 2016

Mrs D Ellinor
Headteacher
St Crispin's Community Primary Infant School
St Crispin's Road
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Dear Mrs Ellinor

Short inspection of St Crispin's Community Primary Infant School

Following my visit to the school on 26 January 2016, 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 May 2011.

This school continues to be good.

Working in a close partnership with the deputy headteacher and other staff, you lead the school very well. You encourage and support people, while also insisting on high standards. There is huge commitment within the school. Consequently, it is developing and improving well. Pupils are very happy. You are keen that St Crispin's will become outstanding and have led the school in clear progress towards that aim. In the meantime, the pupils receive the very good education that they need and deserve.

At the last inspection, the school was recommended to improve outcomes for pupils in reading and in phonics. In reading, this has been achieved well. Many pupils read very well, reaching higher attainment points. However, in the phonics test taken in Year 1, which checks how well pupils link letters and sounds, pupils consistently reach a standard which is below the national average. You have rightly kept this slightly contradictory situation in perspective and avoided overreaction. Nevertheless, you have begun useful work with the staff to improve phonics teaching, which includes learning from the practice in other schools. The early signs are that this is bringing improvement, although there is more to do. The Year 2 readers I listened to reflected the conundrum. They read confidently and with real enjoyment. They understood their appropriately demanding books. However, they sometimes stumbled when sounding out the letters in some unfamiliar words.

Teaching has continued to improve since the 2011 inspection. Staff are well motivated and work as a high-performing, appropriately self-critical team. You ensure prudently that staff across the school use consistent approaches but can also develop their own ideas. This helps to make the school both secure and exciting.

Safeguarding is effective.

School leaders and committed administrative staff ensure that procedures for safeguarding the pupils are carried out correctly. Governors keep a close eye on this. Necessary records are detailed and up to date. The school site is kept appropriately secure. Proper checks on staff, and other adults, are made when they are recruited. Risks are appropriately assessed. All staff receive regular training in child protection procedures and know what to do in different eventualities. Pupils feel safe, secure and well looked after.

Inspection findings

- You lead the school very well. You have a systematic, carefully considered and well-organised approach, which encourages staff and others to give of their best. You consider current educational thinking carefully and consider future developments helpfully alongside colleagues from other schools.
- The deputy headteacher also contributes a very great deal. She and you work as a strong team, each taking key responsibilities.
- You know the school well, evaluating it accurately and with rigour. The school development plan is a living, working document, which guides improvement.
- Staff really like working at the school. The system for managing their performance is very well structured and is linked systematically to the school development plan. It is much valued by staff. Teaching assistants play a key role. Often, their performance management targets accord with those of the teachers they work with, providing a very coherent structure for improving outcomes. Student teachers also are valued and supported. There is productive collaboration. One member of staff explained that 'we are not just teachers of our class, but of the whole school'. This shows in the rigorous and enthusiastic way in which members of staff lead the different subjects across the school.
- Pupils attain well in National Curriculum tests and in the Early Years Foundation Stage profile. They make consistently good progress, and the school checks this carefully. A slightly higher than average proportion of pupils reach the higher levels in writing and mathematics but there is more to do to ensure that pupils make outstanding progress.
- Pupils write carefully and well. Almost all reach the expected standards for their age. They form their letters accurately and neatly. Pupils work hard to improve their use of vocabulary and to use punctuation and grammar correctly.
- Early years provision is well organised, lively and engaging. Reception children much enjoy making guided choices about their learning, indoors and outdoors. From their starting points, they make strong progress and are well prepared for learning in Year 1 and beyond.

- Pupils entitled to the support of pupil premium funding generally achieve well. However, there is a complex pattern in their achievement across the school. Rightly, you wish to make further improvements to the outcomes for some of these pupils. The funding is thoughtfully spent.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs achieve well. Their needs are well met. All pupils have opportunities to use sign language.
- Pupils continue to enjoy a broad, well-planned and interesting curriculum. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and understanding of British values, such as tolerance, are carefully advanced. However, the school cannot yet provide clear evidence of how much pupils know, can do and understand in all of the subjects beyond English and mathematics. Work to do so has begun.
- The lessons observed were purposeful and sharply focused. The classrooms, building and outdoor areas are attractively organised to encourage good learning. Pupils' different needs are generally met well.
- Pupils are cared for and looked after very well. The school works very constructively with parents and families. Attendance by parents at school events and consultation evenings is very high.
- Parents are very happy with the school. They appreciate the individual attention shown to their children and that the children achieve well. One parent summed up for many, saying, 'I believe that St Crispin's School is well run and managed by people who care about educating children. My child is happy at school and feels safe, making very good progress academically.'
- Pupils enjoy school. Their attendance rates are high. Pupils behave very well in and out of lessons. They concentrate and listen carefully. They enjoy playtimes together. They behave caringly and safely. They are friendly, confident and show good humour. Pupils like the 'Appreciation Station', where they are sometimes rewarded for particularly good effort or behaviour.
- The governing body is very well led, judiciously organised and astute in its work. Members make regular, useful and systematically planned visits to the school at work. They are therefore knowledgeable about the school. They support you and the staff well. They review progress against the school development plan meticulously. They also ask sharp, challenging questions of you, expecting (and receiving) clear, detailed answers. For instance, they have recently been insistent in asking about the teaching of phonics, anticipating improvement.
- The local authority provides appropriate, useful support. It gives specific help when you ask. For example, it has recently and usefully facilitated further development of the work of subject leaders.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that the school's current work in the following three areas continues and is monitored carefully:

- improving pupils' understanding of phonics
- enabling more pupils to reach the higher points of attainment in writing and mathematics

- assessing more closely how well pupils are doing in the subjects beyond English and mathematics.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for Kent County Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Robin Hammerton
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I visited lessons in all nine classes in the school, jointly with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. I spoke with pupils and looked at some of their work. I observed at playtime and lunchtime. I met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, members of staff and governors. I spoke by telephone with a representative of the local authority. I took careful account of the 44 responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I also considered the responses from members of staff and pupils to their confidential online questionnaires. I scrutinised documents, including the school development plan, the school's own self-evaluation, minutes of meetings and information about pupils' learning and progress.