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Ms Angela Maxted Headteacher Cheriton Primary School Church Road Folkestone Kent CT20 3EP

Dear Ms Maxted

Short inspection of Cheriton Primary School

Following my visit to the school on Thursday 4 February 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 January 2011.

This school continues to be good.

You, the staff and governors are highly ambitious to make sure that every Cheriton child, regardless of gender, culture, beliefs or ability will succeed, enjoy their time in school and make rapid progress academically and socially. The school is vibrant and the many languages spoken and different cultural heritages are valued and celebrated. The pupils' lives are enriched because you make the most of the diverse cultural and social mix. At the time of the last inspection, the inspector highlighted some significant strengths in the school. These included exceptional care, guidance and support provided for pupils, outstanding engagement and relationships with parents, excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and an outstanding contribution to community cohesion. These strengths have been maintained and continue to be at the heart of the school's success. All staff are proud to work here and enjoy being part of the school.

Just over one quarter of the pupils are from service families and many are Nepalese. You and your staff work closely with the garrison and you understand the specific needs of service children. This group of pupils enjoy their time in Cheriton and achieve very well academically and socially. As well as the cycle of changes which happen when there is a change of personnel at the garrison, the school experiences a higher than average movement of pupils in and out of the school during their primary education. You have very good transition arrangements so that pupils



joining the school are helped to settle very quickly and do not suffer any slow down in their learning. Several parents who spoke to me and who wrote comments in addition to the online survey praised this aspect of the school's work highly.

Parents also praised the high level of engaging and practical activities, not only for pupils but also for parents. You have designed a curriculum which makes good use of the local area and involves interesting activities, many visits and visitors to bring learning to life. Since the previous inspection, standards in reading, writing and mathematics have risen from below average to above the national averages for the younger pupils. Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 rose from well below average to broadly average and most of the pupils make good progress. However, last year the most-able pupils did not achieve as much as they might and you are working hard on tackling this. You check very carefully to make sure that no one is falling behind. You and the other leaders really try to tease out why there are gaps in achievement between different groups and are imaginative in seeking solutions.

The school is a lively, but orderly place and the pupils behave well. They are polite, friendly and keen to do well in their learning. They are attentive in lessons and the quality of their books show that they take a pride in their work. They have a strong voice and know they are listened to and that they make a positive difference to the school. However, sometimes, for example at lunchtimes, the opportunities for them to use their own ideas about how best to spend their time, make decisions, choices and solve problems are rather restricted.

At the previous inspection, the inspector identified pupils' writing, their mental and oral skills in mathematics and the quality of teachers' feedback and guidance for pupils as areas for improvement. Improvements have been achieved in all these aspects. Pupils' writing in books shows that there are good opportunities to write at length for different purposes such as stories and non-fiction. There is also good evidence of writing in different subjects. For example, there is some high-quality scientific writing. The quality of handwriting and presentation is good in all subjects; however, not all teachers expect pupils to write correctly key vocabulary that is integral to their current studies. Pupils are given good opportunities to work out mathematical problems through discussion and through rapid recall of mathematical information such as times tables or number bonds. Teachers plan carefully and the pupils know what they are learning in each lesson. The quality of teachers' questioning and guidance during lessons, and in responses to pupils' written work, moves pupils' thinking on quickly through a 'learning conversation' between pupils and teachers.

Safeguarding is effective.

All staff, and the overwhelming majority of parents, say that pupils are very safe, well-cared-for and happy in school. This reflects the high importance placed on safeguarding at all levels. There are thorough, up-to-date policies and rigorous checking procedures carried out and recorded before anyone is allowed to work in



the school. Staff are well trained and aware of the most recent guidance about aspects such as protecting pupils from the risks of extremism. You have a useful system to highlight, and respond to, any concerns and track the welfare of particularly vulnerable pupils. Material about keeping safe is displayed throughout the school and there is a particular emphasis on internet safety and the use of social media. Older pupils have explored the pros and cons of social media and their writing shows a good understanding of the risks. Governors take their responsibilities very seriously and carry out safeguarding and health and safety checks. There are high levels of individual attention and care to help all pupils to stay safe in and out of school.

Inspection findings

- Leaders, including the governors, provide clear purpose, vision and direction to keep the school moving forward in ways that balance academic and social achievement. Values strongly underpin all aspects of the school's work and are evident in daily life. The school is outward looking and leaders seek out good practice from outside the school in partnership with the other schools in The Vicus Co-operative Learning Trust and beyond.
- Teaching and learning is checked regularly and all staff receive well-targeted support and training to hone their skills and build on their interests. School selfevaluation is thorough and honest. Priorities are addressed in the well-focused school improvement plans. These plans are rigorously and regularly checked by governors to make sure that actions are bringing about the targeted improvements.
- The school is currently embedding new assessment arrangements and staff are becoming more confident in using these. The system has thrown up some issues and some very low targets were set at the beginning of the year, particularly for disadvantaged pupils. The school is working to address this and the potentially low expectations that it highlights. It is evident from the most recent checks and the work in the pupils' books that pupils are making better progress than the initial targets suggested.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are significant strengths of the school. The well-being and emotional health of everybody, including staff and leaders, is a key priority for the governing body. Pupils are friendly, polite and demonstrate strong values. The diversity of the community is celebrated in daily life and through many activities including cultural festivals, focus weeks such as the music, art and drama week happening at the moment and the pupil language ambassadors' work with their Polish classmates. The community also comes together to support each other when events like the earthquake in Nepal affect some of its families very badly.
- Staff are alert to any underlying issues such as friendship problems or family difficulties that could adversely affect pupils' learning and well-being. They are very proactive in tackling problems early and quickly. For example, they provide extra support, including individual and small-group sessions, and involve families. Relationships with parents are very positive and many parents attend activities such as 'stay and play' sessions and adult learning classes.



- The pupils are enthusiastic learners. This was very apparent during drum and dance sessions inspired by visiting musicians earlier in the week. It could be seen in the miniature African drums produced by the Year 4 pupils and heard in the lovely singing of the gospel choir after school club. In the weekly Nepali class, all the pupils thoroughly enjoyed becoming skilled linguists in two languages.
- Some times of the day, such as lunchtime, are well organised with a variety of adult-led activities which pupils enjoy. However, the pupils are rather constrained during these times and depend on the adults to impose order and solve any difficulties that might arise, rather than developing self-discipline. There are too few opportunities for them to play independently or to make informed and appropriate choices and take responsibility for their own behaviour.
- In all lessons, pupils are attentive, keen to participate and do their best. The school is calm, well ordered and welcoming. The revised curriculum has been planned effectively to provide a good range of interesting and sometimes exciting activities. The teachers make use of the local area and its people and this helps to make the learning relevant and memorable. The investigative approach in science leads to some surprising discoveries. It is evident from the books that Year 3 pupils found some unexpected results from their nappy testing experiments.
- Teachers promote high expectations of the quality of handwriting and presentation of work and this is reflected in pupils' books right across the school. However, the school has rightly identified that spelling is a weakness and this is a current priority for improvement. Various activities are being used to address the issue but too often words which are key vocabulary, such as historical or scientific terms, are spelled incorrectly. Some everyday words such as the month or day of the week are incorrect and this restricts the quality of the pupils' writing.
- Rapid progress is evident in many of the pupils' books and it is clear that teachers plan carefully to build the learning from day to day and over time. They share the aims of lessons with the pupils and give them time to reflect on how successful they are in achieving the aims. Pupils know what they are learning and what they need to do to improve their work. For example, in a Year 1 writing lesson, the pupils were very clear about using finger spaces, interesting words and punctuation in their sentences about Old Bear.
- Adults provide useful guidance during lessons and use good questioning to deepen pupils' understanding. In a Year 4 geography lesson, the teacher prompted pupils' discussion about features of factual writing that they had used such as bullet points and text boxes, as well as recapping on their knowledge of terms such as 'mountain ranges' and 'summits'. In a Year 6 introductory lesson on algebra, the pupils were challenged to think hard in order to solve the problems and celebrated as they began to 'see the algebraic light'. Teachers are assiduous in providing useful comments and additional challenges in the pupils' books and, this helps to move the learning on.



Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should take steps to:

- improve the quality of pupils' written work by expecting them to spell correctly topic-related vocabulary and every day words such as days of the week and months
- provide more opportunities for pupils to develop self-discipline, make choices and decisions and to solve problems throughout the school day.

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. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Sheena MacDonald Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, the deputy headteacher, other senior leaders, five members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority. I visited most of the teaching groups during the day, along with the headteacher, to observe the quality of teaching and learning. I also looked at a sample of writing, mathematics, history and science books. I took account of 24 staff questionnaires, 107 responses to Parent View (Ofsted's online questionnaire) and the school's most recent parent survey. I spoke to parents at the start of the school day. I analysed a range of the school's documentation, including information about teaching, pupils' achievement, staff training records, safeguarding checks, policies, and procedures. I also looked at, and discussed with you, the evaluation of the school's effectiveness and the current improvement plans.