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Miss Sarah Curtis
Executive Headteacher
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Five Ashes
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Dear Miss Curtis

Short inspection of Five Ashes CofE Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 14 June 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 2012.

This school continues to be good.

Leaders have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since joining the school in January, you have been sensitive to the legacy of your long-serving predecessor and the views of parents, staff and governors, while moving the school forward at a brisk pace. As a result, you have won the overwhelming confidence of the whole school community. The diocese and local authority also rightly appreciate the improvements you have achieved at the school in a relatively short time. You are making the most of strengths in staffing within Five Ashes and from Mayfield CofE Primary, where you are also the headteacher, to ensure that teaching is good throughout the school. These strengths include established good teaching at Five Ashes, the expertise of the new head of school appointed from Mayfield at Easter, and the addition of an experienced teacher recruited in January to teach the Reception Year children.

You have sustained the school's ethos of care and attention for each pupil. Pupils feel happy and safe at school and continue to behave well during lessons and social times. This helps them to enjoy school and learn well. Following the good example of all the adults, pupils care well for one another. Watching playtime, I saw pupils stop their game and ask 'Are you OK?' to a friend who had tripped, before resuming their play. Your promotion of 'values for life' during assembly, currently 'resourcefulness', supports pupils to reflect helpfully on their approach to learning and to one another.

You promptly identified the need to support older pupils to make accelerated

progress, particularly in mathematics, and to ensure that the most able pupils are challenged successfully to achieve the learning they are capable of. The new resources and methods of teaching you have introduced have been well received by staff and successfully implemented.

You and governors are not complacent, however. You have rightly identified the need to build further on the successful work done after the last inspection to develop the curriculum. While pupils' attendance has improved significantly since January, you know that a small minority of pupils continue to experience too many absences from school. Governors are aware of their need to obtain more first-hand information in monitoring the school's work, particularly about teaching and pupils' achievement.

Safeguarding is effective.

The school's ethos of care and attention for pupils' individual needs is clear. Staff know pupils and their families well. Safeguarding policies meet requirements. Staff and governors are well trained so that any concerns are recognised and reported promptly. Governors oversee the health and safety of the premises and the management of child protection well, through checks made by designated governors during their regular visits. The diocesan representative described the school to me as 'a small school which looks out'. This ensures that procedures are kept up to date and leaders and staff learn well from the experiences of other schools. Supervision in the playground is attentive and caring, and recently increased to reassure parents. This means that accidents and incidents are pre-empted so that pupils play safely and happily together. Prompt first-aid is given if necessary. In assemblies and termly updates, pupils are taught well about the risks of social media and how to keep safe online.

Pupils told me they do not experience bullying, but they are sure adults would step in promptly if necessary. Some parents responding to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, expressed a concern about bullying. I found you take these concerns seriously and look into them conscientiously. Most parents responding to the survey, and those I met in the playground, were positive about the care staff provide, with some being very complementary.

Inspection findings

- Your leadership is clear and unequivocal. You have refreshed the school's vision with high expectations for the quality of teaching and every pupil's achievement. Pupils, staff and governors welcome your approach. Some parents responding to Parent View said that you have brought an 'injection of passion and enthusiasm', others commented 'we have already seen standards rise'.
- Your recent appointment of an experienced teacher from Mayfield as head of school has strengthened leadership at Five Ashes, ensuring that a senior leader is present every day.

- You are sensibly considering the development of subject leadership to support your proposed enrichment of the curriculum. You have taken effective steps to improve the leadership of mathematics, supporting teachers more fully to develop their knowledge and skills.
- The effective special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) is receiving valuable support from the SENCo at Mayfield, while working towards national accreditation for this role.
- You have established a secure cycle of checks on teaching, with helpful feedback to teachers. Teachers appreciate the relevant training and development you provide, and their growing professional partnership with colleagues at Mayfield. Your appointment of an additional experienced teacher in Willow Class, to focus specifically on Reception-age children, has enriched provision for these children, inside and outside the classroom.
- The new methods of assessing and recording pupils' progress you have introduced allow teachers to compare their judgements with colleagues at Mayfield and other local schools, supporting their increasing accuracy. Some parents responding to Parent View commented they would like more information about their children's progress. The new assessment systems have supported the development of a useful end of year report format, which is now ready to be introduced.
- The school's curriculum covers all the areas of the national curriculum and provides regular opportunities for visits and activities beyond the school. Pupils have recently visited the Royal Pavilion in Brighton and the Science Museum in London. Pupils learn about the major religions represented in the United Kingdom, and mark celebrations such as Chinese New Year. Nevertheless, you have correctly identified that pupils' learning about life in modern Britain can be developed further. You are also aware that richer opportunities can be introduced in all subjects, for pupils to use and extend their reading, writing and mathematical skills, and to inspire and challenge the most able pupils.
- Governors are well informed about the school's strengths and areas for development, through the detailed reports which you provide. They are diligent in meeting their responsibilities for finance, safeguarding and the premises. Governors are scrupulous in their oversight of pupil premium spending. (The pupil premium is additional government funding for pupils who are entitled to free school meals and children looked after.) Governors are being conscientious in their consultation with parents about the school's future. The chair of the governing body sensibly maintains close contact with you. However, governors more generally do not gather enough first-hand information to inform their understanding of the reports you provide, particularly about teaching and pupils' progress.
- In January, you swiftly identified the small group of pupils who needed to improve their attendance, and reminded parents of their responsibilities. You have also given good attendance a high profile in your new weekly newsletter. Most families have responded positively, but you continue to monitor closely and support a small group of pupils where issues remain. Helpfully, governors have clarified the school's attendance policy and support you fully. Pupils told me how much they value the new rewards for

good attendance which are given in Friday celebration assemblies, and their pride in seeing their class attendance figures rising.

- Your analysis of the quality of teaching is accurate. You are taking effective action to ensure that pupils are taught consistently well throughout the school. The new resources for teaching mathematics you have introduced, together with the clear scheme outlining the learning you expect to see each year, are supporting pupils well to make the good progress I saw in their work books. This includes increasing opportunities to apply their mathematical skills to investigate and solve mathematical problems, and increasing the level of challenge for pupils, including for the most able. Some parents responding to Parent View commented that they feel their children are more challenged in their learning due to the changes you have made.
- You and the head of school are supporting teachers well to improve the quality of the texts they introduce to pupils, and how they use reading to stimulate pupils' ideas for writing. I saw pupils in Years 1 and 2 inspired to write sympathetically about 'why I feel small', as they thought about the tiny snail in the book the teacher had just shared with them. Their enjoyment of the story inspired these pupils to write thoughtfully and carefully, producing work of a high quality. Good progress in writing was evident throughout the samples of pupils' work I saw. This included in Year 6, where the additional teaching you have organised is clearly boosting pupils' achievement before they move on to secondary school.
- From starting points which are typically those expected for their ages, pupils make good progress in Reception Year. The minority who enter the school with knowledge and skills below those typical for their age are supported well to make good progress. The most able children are identified and challenged effectively to learn well. As a result, the proportion of pupils who reach a good level of development by the end of Reception Year is rising. This year, the school's information shows this figure is likely to be well above the national average.
- Phonics (letters and the sounds they make) is taught well in Willow Class (Reception Year and key stage 1). There is no notable difference between the achievement of boys and girls, or between pupils supported by the pupil premium and others. As a result, the proportion of pupils who reach the expected standard in Year 1 is rising. The school's information indicates that this year the proportion of pupils at the school who reach the expected standard is likely to at least match the national figure.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability are cared for well and supported to make good progress. The SENCo ensures timely identification and diagnosis of need. Teachers provide teaching assistants with clear guidance, so the support they provide for these pupils is precise.
- You ensure that pupil premium resources are used wisely. As a result, all pupils supported by this additional funding make good, and sometimes strikingly good, progress. Gaps between the achievement of these pupils and others are closing rapidly.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- all pupils attend regularly
- the curriculum provides rich opportunities for pupils to learn well about life in modern Britain, to extend and consolidate their English and mathematics skills, and to inspire the most able pupils to excel
- governors obtain more first-hand information about teaching and pupils' learning, to inform their understanding of the reports leaders provide.

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

Yours sincerely

Sian Thornton
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and the head of school to discuss your evaluation of the school's effectiveness and priorities for further improvement. With you, I visited all the classrooms and observed teaching in Willow Class. Together with the head of school, we looked at samples of pupils' English and mathematics work from Year 1 to Year 6. I talked with parents in the playground at the start of the day, analysed the 24 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and considered emails from parents. I met with a group of pupils and talked with others during lessons and at lunchtime. I spoke with staff around the school and considered the two responses to Ofsted's staff survey. I held telephone conversations with representatives of the diocese and local authority. A range of documents was considered, including information about teaching and pupils' achievement, the school's self-evaluation summary and improvement plan, governing body records, information about pupils' attendance and behaviour, and safeguarding checks and policies.