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26 July 2016

Mr M Painter
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Painter

Short inspection of Cherry Orchard Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 6 July 2016 with Rob Hackfath, Her Majesty's Inspector, 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 June 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since the last inspection, there have been significant changes in both staff and structures. You took up your appointment as headteacher in January 2015 and lost no time identifying where further improvements were required, and establishing more effective systems and processes for monitoring the progress of pupils and to check the quality of teaching. You have established an ethos of continuing improvement, ensuring that staff and pupils understand and live by the school's vision of 'learning without limits'. Consequently, teachers, pupils and governors speak of their pride in belonging to this school and the vast majority of parents believe that the school is providing a high-quality education for their children.

You and your deputy have worked very effectively together to bring about a culture of shared responsibility for pupils' outcomes. The review and revision of phase leader roles, carried out since your arrival, have ensured that assessment information is now used carefully and effectively. Phase leaders regularly check that pupils are making the progress they should, and that teachers are using this information to plan learning for pupils that is based on their needs. Training and opportunities to share good practice have been regular features of staff development so that class teachers are now fully involved in the 'plan, do, review' approach to raising pupils' achievement. As a result, rates of progress for pupils currently in the school are rising again, particularly in key stage 1 and lower key stage 2.

The previous inspection report identified the need to improve the learning and progress of lower-attaining pupils, particularly in mathematics and writing. You have acted quickly to revise the curriculum, introducing a delivery model that provides practical activities linked to pupils' real-life experiences with a particular emphasis on outdoor learning through your 'Forest School' provision. This is having a positive effect on reducing the gaps between lower-attaining pupils and others in the school, particularly in key stage 1 and lower key stage 2. Equally, in most year groups, gaps in progress for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and for those disadvantaged pupils who are eligible for pupil premium funding are closing rapidly.

Pupils say, and their parents agree, that they enjoy coming to school because they feel safe, their views are listened to and they learn in interesting ways. Pupils say that staff care about them and there is always someone to talk to if they have a problem. Pupils are kind to one another and it was notable during the inspection that older pupils naturally undertook to take care of those younger than themselves.

Safeguarding is effective.

All relevant checks on staff, visitors and volunteers are carried out rigorously. The school has well-developed safeguarding processes and procedures that meet all statutory requirements. Policies are up to date, regularly reviewed and implemented effectively. All staff are aware of what to do if they have concerns. Safeguarding training is part of the induction programme for all staff and regular refresher training is provided for existing staff. Written records are detailed and provide a clear timeline of actions taken and their outcomes for all incidents that occur, including those that are relatively minor. The school takes great care to ensure that past problems do not recur through keeping a close watch on those pupils who have experienced previous difficulties, as well as current concerns.

Pupils say that bullying is rare and when it happens it is dealt with quickly and effectively. Most parents agree and the school's records support pupils' views.

Pupils have a good awareness of how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations. Younger children spoke with understanding about road safety and 'stranger danger', and were very clear about telling an adult if they were scared or worried about anything. Older pupils are well-versed in internet safety and the risks involved in using social media.

Inspection findings

- You have successfully created an ethos of 'togetherness' that encompasses staff and pupils in their joint aim of learning without limits. The Cherry Orchard Primary School (COPS) aims are an integral part of this. Pupils enthusiastically explain how these aims, such as collaboration, negotiation, respect and tolerance, are part of their daily lives at school, in classrooms and outside. They are excited about earning rewards for achieving the aims,

and the opportunities their teachers provide for them to do so, because there is a strong culture of celebrating achievement in all aspects of school life.

- Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for themselves and for others, for instance through membership of the school council, fundraising activities and 'buddy' roles for younger children. They are very proud of the influence they have on school life and feel that their opinions are actively sought and then acted on.
- You have a clear and accurate view of the school's strengths and priorities for further improvement which are firmly based on pupils' progress and the standards reached by different groups in different subjects. You correctly identified the need to improve rates of progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and of lower-attaining pupils across year groups. Although gaps between boys and girls and between disadvantaged pupils and others in the school are similar to those found nationally, you have also prioritised reducing these further.
- Governors provide a robust strategic direction which is focused on continued improvement. They are proud of the school's achievements and strengths but challenge leaders rigorously against those areas identified as priorities for further improvement. Governors actively seek the most up-to-date training to ensure that they have an appropriate range of knowledge and experience and this is utilised effectively. Regular visits to the school by link governors ensure that they have first-hand knowledge of standards within the school as well as detailed information from you and your leaders. As a result, they have a good understanding of the quality of teaching and of pupils' progress.
- Your introduction of the school's 'Thrive' programme is bearing fruit. Additional support for those pupils requiring additional emotional and neurological support and nurture, alongside such initiatives as the breakfast buddies club, has had a marked and positive effect on attendance, punctuality and readiness to learn.
- The innovative assessment system introduced to support the new curriculum is proving effective in helping you to achieve your aim of every child achieving as much as they can. As a result, you are now able to identify progress made by each child against each aspect of every subject. Information is used effectively at whole-school level to identify any patterns of underachievement that may emerge across groups as well as common weaknesses within a subject. Equally, teachers are making good use of the same information to ensure that planning for pupils' learning is very well focused on individual needs.
- The reorganisation of middle leadership through phase leaders has brought additional rigour to the monitoring of pupils' progress and the quality of teaching. There has been a marked shift from teachers and phase leaders being told what assessment information should be telling them, to phase leaders checking that teachers are analysing and using such information effectively to raise achievement. Every phase leader provides an action plan to show how they will contribute to the school's overarching improvement plan, and reports directly to governors about the progress they are making. As a result, plans are working documents that are regularly reviewed to

reflect the next steps required, with a constant emphasis on whether actions taken are accelerating pupils' progress.

- Teachers are enthusiastic about the changes that have been put in place under your leadership. They say that they are expected to work hard and maintain high expectations of all pupils. They are very happy to do so because they can see the impact on pupils' progress. For instance, teachers feel that the 'choice and challenge' introduced this year has removed perceived limits to what pupils can aspire to. In turn, pupils' self-esteem has increased so that they have higher expectations of themselves. During visits to classrooms, inspectors noted how many pupils chose to complete more challenging work and how proud they were to have done so.
- Children settle into Reception quickly because teachers take time and effort to get to know them very well. Children are provided with a well-organised, stimulating learning environment. Routines are quickly established and children follow these cheerfully. High expectations of behaviour are set and met by all children because they are helped to understand what is expected of them and why. A range of carefully prepared activities are available for children to access independently or with adult guidance as appropriate. The proportion of children achieving a good level of development fluctuates from year to year because, in some years, a high proportion of children enter with skills and understanding below those typically expected for their age. However, assessment records and evidence in children's workbooks and their 'learning journeys' show that most are making good progress from their starting points. Nonetheless, it remains the case that girls' achievement is stronger than that of boys in reading, writing and number. As a result of the new assessment system, children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are being identified quickly and are making better progress from their starting points than previously.
- The proportion of pupils meeting the required standard in the Year 1 phonics screening test has improved slightly since 2014 but remains just below the national figure. However, changes made to the teaching of phonics this year are beginning to accelerate achievement and to help older pupils to catch up. For instance, almost all pupils who entered Year 3 without having met the standard have now done so.
- Attainment at the end of key stage 1 in 2015 was above the national average in reading and writing and in line with the national figure for mathematics. This represented a significant improvement in pupils' achievement in writing compared with 2014. Current assessment information and work seen in pupils' books by inspectors indicate that improvement has been sustained this year.
- In 2015, the proportion of Year 6 pupils making the expected rate of progress in reading, writing and mathematics was broadly in line with or above the proportion who did so nationally. The proportion reaching the nationally expected level of attainment, however, was above average. Inspectors noted that work in the books of current pupils in all year groups shows that the vast majority are working at, or progressing towards, age-related expectations, and in some cases are exceeding these. The exception is pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities in Year 3 and Year 4, and you have taken rapid action to address this.

- During the inspection, information about the national tests for Year 6 arrived in the school, which suggests a positive comparison overall with initial government figures. However, achievement in writing is not as good as in other subjects and remains an area for improvement. This matches the school's evaluation and identified priority to improve writing, particularly in upper key stage 2.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils, particularly boys, are provided with more opportunities to use and apply their writing skills in subjects other than English
- teachers in the early years develop approaches that will close the gap in achievement between boys and girls
- rates of progress for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are further improved, particularly in Year 3 and Year 4.

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

Yours sincerely

Mel Ford
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, inspectors met you, the deputy headteacher, the special educational needs co-ordinator, a group of four governors, including the chair of the governing body, a group of teachers, groups of pupils, parents and a representative from the local authority. Inspectors visited classrooms and observed the work of teachers and pupils. They considered responses from parents, pupils and teachers to electronic surveys. Inspectors also looked at a range of documents including the school's self-evaluation and plans for development, pupils' assessment information, school policies, including those for safeguarding, child protection and special educational needs, and documents about the use and impact of government funding. Inspectors evaluated the school's use of pupil premium funding (additional funding provided by the government for those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those children who are looked after by the local authority) and the sports premium funding.