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Mrs Heather Dawson
Headteacher
Cockshutt CofE Primary School and Nursery
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Dear Mrs Dawson

Short inspection of Cockshutt CofE Primary School and Nursery

Following my visit to the school on 6 July 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 September 2010.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Staff, leaders and governors have created a culture that values pupils' work and contributions and are very committed to the school's mission statement, 'To provide a quality of education for all, for life.' You provide strong and effective leadership and continue to forge positive links with the church and local community, as well as effective partnerships with other schools in the local network. The staff plan a creative and varied curriculum that interests and enlivens pupils and has a very positive effect on their academic and personal development.

Parents are pleased with the way staff look after and nurture their children in a safe and caring school community. There is a very strong commitment to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Like all parents I spoke to during the inspection, one reflected the views of others by stating, 'Since being at the school my child has grown in confidence and has developed a love of learning. The school has had a large part to play in this.' Parents are right; pupils love coming to school and enjoy learning, which is also reflected in high attendance rates.

You and the governing body are committed to continuous improvement. The teaching is effective and continues to improve. The professional development of teachers and support staff has strengthened teaching further.

You and your governors have secured some key staff appointments in recent years, including that of a very competent deputy headteacher who leads by her very good example in the classroom. You and the deputy headteacher lead from the front so that best practice is shared across the school and within the local network of schools.

There is now room for further improvement in the consistency, form and structure of pupils' independent writing, particularly focusing on the accuracy of their spelling. Your staff and leaders have recognised this through accurate evaluations of pupils' work and progress. There is evidence from the most effective practice in Years 5 and 6 of significant improvements to pupils' writing. You have introduced new ways of teaching early reading and writing skills, for example through the use of new methods of teaching phonics (letters and the sounds they make). This is having a positive impact already, as seen in the most recent phonics screening test results in Year 1 where there has been improvement compared with the previous year.

Pupils achieve well in basic numeracy and calculation but some tend to struggle with more complex problem-solving tasks. The evidence from pupils' work in books and from discussions with pupils about their mathematics work shows that teachers are not always looking for gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding. The most able pupils in particular find it difficult to work out more complex tasks or to think logically for themselves, relying too much on instructions from teachers.

You, your staff and governors have evaluated accurately the school's strengths and areas for improvement. You have set out the right priorities in the school improvement plan. However, the improvement plan does not include clear measures of success to gauge how well each priority is being achieved. Moreover, there are no clear timescales or milestones in the plan to systematically check if leaders and teachers are making enough progress towards your stated targets for improvement.

Provision for children in the early years remains strong. The governing body expanded provision since the previous inspection to include provision for two-year-old children in the Nursery together with three-year-olds. The combination of both extended before- and after-school provision, ensures that the early years now offers parents good choices of part-time and full-time education and care. You and the early years teacher manage provision very well and include flexible arrangements for parents to choose whether they wish their Nursery children to have full-time or part-time arrangements which can be modified according to children's and parents' needs. The parents I spoke to expressed high levels of satisfaction which has built upon the strong provision reported at the time of the previous inspection.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Staff vetting procedures are rigorous and up to date. There are robust systems and risk assessments in place to keep pupils safe. Teaching, support and administrative staff are well trained and vigilant.

You ensure that staff diligently check and verify the identity of visitors when they first arrive at school. Both governors and staff keep up to date with legal requirements and undertake regular reviews of the school's procedures. The safety and well-being of two-year-old children in the Nursery is managed by well-qualified and highly skilled early years practitioners.

All pupils and parents that I spoke to agreed that pupils are safe in school and are very well cared for by the staff. Pupils say that the staff and other pupils make them feel very safe, valued and secure in school. Older pupils buddy with younger ones to make sure that pupils feel safe and know who to go to if they are worried or have any concerns.

Inspection findings

- Your leadership is effective. You make sure that teaching is monitored regularly and systematically. Governors are involved in school activities and are very committed to the school and local community. They are knowledgeable and receive regular updates on teaching and its impact on pupils' outcomes. The school improvement plan sets out the right priorities for improvement. However, the plan does not have clear stages or milestones with targets that can be measured so that leaders can routinely check that the school's actions are on course to achieve the targets set out in the plan.
- Pupils are very well behaved, polite and proud of their school. The pastoral support and welfare provided for pupils is of high quality. Strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural development underpins the work of the school and is enhanced by its special relationship with the local church and community. Relationships between staff and pupils and among pupils are very positive.
- Assessment information is being refined and adapted to ensure that it is accessible to staff and governors and provides accurate details of the progress pupils make. Although assessments help teachers to gauge how much progress pupils make, teachers do not always identify gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding in mathematics.
- Teachers and support staff set high expectations. There are no significant achievement gaps between different groups, such as between disadvantaged pupils and others, or between boys and girls. National assessments show some fluctuations each year because there are small numbers in each class, making it difficult to interpret trends. Nevertheless, there are some relative weaknesses in pupils' achievement in writing and mathematics.
- Standards in writing are lower than in reading. The form and structure of pupils' writing is inconsistent in Years 1 to 4. Workbooks show that pupils make unnecessary spelling errors of words that are familiar to them. Workbooks in the Year 5 and 6 class show accelerated progress and pupils write accurately with confidence, reflecting strong and effective teaching.
- Pupils are provided with good opportunities to solve problems in mathematics lessons. There are, however, gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding which hinders their ability to tackle more complex number problems. Workbooks show that pupils are given time and opportunity to correct

number calculations and teachers mark pupils' work consistently well to encourage more progress. However, when asked to solve more complex tasks, pupils tend to rely on step-by-step instructions and are not used to thinking logically for themselves to tackle problems.

- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with education, health and care plans, achieve well. Parents confirmed to me that the headteacher and staff take great care to ensure that all pupils participate and are included in activities and special events. The attention and care that pupils with additional learning needs receive improves their confidence and achievement.
- Leaders and staff create a very positive climate for learning. The school provides a broad and stimulating curriculum. British values of tolerance, respect for others and democracy are firmly embedded in the curriculum and culture of the school. You and your staff are successful in promoting the core aims, as stated in your curriculum, 'To provide meaningful, memorable, relevant learning experiences which meet the needs of all the children, creates opportunities for awe and wonder and is balanced across all areas of the national curriculum.'
- The many and varied activities, projects, themes and events you all plan include opportunities for pupils to participate in adventurous outdoor pursuits and residential visits. Outstanding use is made of your school grounds to study wildlife and to grow flowers and vegetables in specially prepared areas. You organise special enrichment days, or as you refer to them, 'wow days' each half term. The curriculum is very strong and is of enormous benefit to pupils. I witnessed the impact this is having on pupils at first hand during lunchtime as pupils happily shared their school experiences with me and spoke enthusiastically about special events, visits, musical performances and enrichment days. The school provides excellent opportunities for pupils to engage in healthy and active sports, as well as learn to play a musical instrument, learn another European language, or thrive in the many and varied creative and performing arts activities.
- Since the previous inspection, you and the governing body have been successful in expanding the early years provision to include two-year-old children in the Nursery. This extends the all-round welfare, care and education that the school provides for two- to five-year-old children. During the inspection, children were very engaged in the range of stimulating indoor and outdoor activities provided for them. Reception-aged children thoroughly enjoyed their mathematics work in the 'cosy shed' with an adult as they identified numbers when playing 'maths bingo'.
- Two-year-olds benefit from the many and varied opportunities they have to improve their speech and language as they describe the shapes they make with coloured dough or when using 'messy' coloured rice to form patterns. Early writing is improving very well in the Reception Year as pupils write well-formed sentences about traditional and modern stories. They thoroughly enjoyed re-enacting one of their stories when visiting the 'forest' in the school grounds to go on a 'bear hunt'.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- there is a continued focus on raising standards in writing, especially in Years 1 to 4, focusing particularly on improving the accuracy of pupils' spelling
- teachers and support staff look for gaps in pupils' mathematical knowledge and understanding, especially those who are capable of reaching or exceeding age-related expectations in mathematics so they can apply logical thinking rather than learning just through trial and error
- the school improvement plan includes more specific and measurable measures of success against each of the planned actions – making sure to include timescales so that leaders can routinely check how much progress is being made in each of the school's priorities for improvement.

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

Yours sincerely

Charalambos Loizou
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

In addition to meeting with you, your deputy headteacher and three governors, including the chair of the governing body, you and I visited lessons in all classrooms and the early years. I spoke to a number of parents at the start of the school day to seek their views about the school. I also considered the views of parents and carers recorded on the most recent school survey and some comments sent to Ofsted during the inspection by text message.

I spoke to a number of pupils during lessons and looked at their work in books. I also met a group of pupils from key stage 2 to discuss their mathematics work and had lunch with some pupils to discuss their views about the school.

A senior school improvement adviser from Shropshire local authority visited to speak with me about the support offered by the authority. I looked at the results from the most recent national tests and teacher assessments, focusing on pupils' outcomes in the Reception Year, phonics screening test results in Year 1 and assessment results in Years 2 and 6 in reading, writing and mathematics. I scrutinised and discussed the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan and checked staff vetting and safeguarding procedures to determine whether the school's arrangements for safeguarding are effective.