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Mrs Tina Daniel
Executive Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Daniel

Short inspection of Copythorne Church of England Infant School

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 November 2011.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Under your strong direction, the school has continued to provide individualised care and education, so pupils are confident, happy and excited to come to school each day. Parents told me how much they appreciate the 'nurturing' and 'passionate' staff who know and support the pupils well. They say that they feel fortunate to be part of the school community.

The 'forest values' of friendship, openness, respect, endurance, stewardship and trust are woven through the curriculum and whole-school worship. Pupils know and can explain what these values mean for them in school, at home with their families and in the wider world. One of the pupils described endurance as 'you have to keep on doing it and you can't give up!' Pupils speak confidently about making the right choices and can explain what happens if they make the wrong ones.

The curriculum is well planned and motivating, making good use of the location, grounds and accommodation. An example of this is the 'guardians of the forest project', in which pupils learned about their responsibilities to take care of their environment and be safe in the New Forest. These opportunities have encouraged boys to produce good quality descriptions and explanations. Consequently, there is no longer a gap between the written work produced by girls and boys, which was identified as a weakness at the last inspection.

You have been effective in tackling the other areas for improvement. As we observed in classes, teachers now use lesson time well to walk around the class, talking to pupils and seeing how well they are getting on, adjusting activities accordingly. They now make sure that pupils can complete the tasks and make good progress in lessons. We saw examples in books of pupils developing their skills over time, especially in writing. Teachers also use assessment information well to identify pupils' next steps in learning. The training and development you have given to subject leaders has ensured that core subjects, such as English and mathematics, are led well and are helping to improve teaching. You are aware that the same effective development is required for leaders of other subjects.

Working with federation leaders, you have drawn up a detailed action plan which identifies a number of actions which have led, or are leading, to improvements. At present, it is not clear in these plans exactly how pupils' learning will improve because of what you are doing, and how you can check this. The most able pupils make steady progress and do well at the end of their time in school. However, you do not specifically aim for them to achieve at a higher standard. This means that if pupils do not do quite as well as they could, this is not identified.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors understand the importance of safeguarding and do all that they can to keep pupils safe. They make sure that training for leaders, staff and governors is regular and thorough. Governors ensure that staff understand their responsibilities through asking safeguarding questions when they visit classes. Leaders maintain a detailed and appropriate central record of all staff and volunteers who come to the school.

You and the head of learning check that concerns are recorded thoroughly and that follow up action is identified and carried out. The documentation to support safeguarding and safer recruitment processes meets requirements and provides useful details for staff and parents.

Inspection findings

- Inspired by your strong vision and high expectations, staff demonstrate commitment to pupils and a determination for the school to be as good as it can be. As a result, the school continues to provide good-quality education for pupils and is well positioned to improve further.
- During periods of instability in the leadership team, you have worked diligently to continue to improve teaching. Since September, when the new head of learning joined, you have worked closely with her, developing her skills to drive improvements. Together, you have ensured that the effectiveness of teaching has been maintained and improved further.
- The actions in the improvement plan identify useful ways to develop the school further. The recent research project to support summer born boys during their first year of school has enabled leaders and teachers to identify ways to increase their progress so they catch up. However, because the actions do not define

specifically how pupils' learning will be improved, it is not always clear whether what you are doing has helped pupils to learn more.

- Leaders and teachers check how well pupils are doing. Your work to ensure that assessment is accurate has been helpful in enabling teachers to know exactly what level pupils are working at. You identify any pupils who are at risk of falling behind and take action to help them make the progress they should.
- Governors challenge and support you and other leaders well. They seek ways to be even more effective in their roles. An example of this is the adjustment which they made to the timing of the school improvement committee meetings. The committee now visits classes to observe the school in action. Governors are clear about how well the school is doing and know the priorities for further improvement.
- Subject leaders for English and mathematics work effectively across the federation. Although the writing leader is not based at Copythorne, she ensures that writing is taught well and pupils have relevant and interesting opportunities to write for a purpose. Consequently, pupils' written work shows improvements in sentence construction, vocabulary choices, and use of punctuation.
- Parents are very positive about the school, speaking effusively of the way in which staff go above and beyond to care for their children. Parents respond slightly less positively about homework. Some teachers make the most of home learning opportunities by setting work that supports pupils' class work. However, governors and leaders recognise that this is not consistently the case, so are considering how they can make it more useful to help pupils' learning.
- In the Reception class, children are effectively supported and cared for, so they are happy, confident and independent. They play cooperatively together, making supportive comments about each other. An example of this was when a child drew an accurate circle around himself. One of the children playing with him said, 'That's a really good circle. How did you make it so good?' The activities offered are interesting and fun for the children to do. The indoor activities are slightly better structured to build learning than the outdoor activities.
- The learning journeys and children's workbooks show that they are making good progress in all areas. The percentage of children who are on track to achieve a good level of development this year is once again higher than the national average and higher than last year.
- Phonics (letters and the sounds they make) continues to be taught well. This is reflected in the high number of pupils who achieved the expected level in the phonics check. The pupils did even better than last year and their results continue to compare favourably with other schools nationally.
- Teachers plan activities to meet pupils' needs and help them to make progress. In all classes, pupils were set tasks at the right level for them. The activities for the most able pupils were relevant and enabled them to deepen their understanding. However, because there is not a sharp enough focus on what these pupils could achieve, if they do not do quite as well as they should it is not noticed as quickly as it could be.
- Pupils are well prepared for their move to junior school. They achieve well and make good progress over the course of their time at the school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- actions to improve the school are carefully linked to pupils' outcomes, so leaders know if their actions are helping pupils to learn more
- they further raise expectations of, and be ambitious for, the most able pupils
- the skills of subject leaders are developed so that they can drive improvements in teaching and learning in their areas of responsibility.

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

Yours sincerely

Louise Adams
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, the head of learning, and subject leaders. I also met a group of governors, including the chair of the governing body, and I saw the safeguarding governor separately. I had a telephone conversation with the local authority adviser. With you and the head of learning, I observed teaching in each class and I scrutinised work in pupils' books. I observed pupils' behaviour at lunchtime and around the school and in worship. I spoke to a few parents before school in the playground and considered the responses of 11 parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I also took account of parents' views through the governors' annual survey. I analysed a range of documentation including the school's self-evaluation, school improvement plan, information about pupils' progress and safeguarding checks, policies and procedures.