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Ms Sandra Furno
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Furno

Short inspection of Christ Church CofE Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 11 October 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 December 2012.

This school continues to be good.

Along with the deputy headteacher, staff and governors, you take effective steps to address the school's priorities for improvement. For example, your work to improve the teaching of phonics has increased the proportions of pupils achieving the expected standard. Your focus on improving pupils' attendance levels has ensured that more pupils are attending school regularly and that pupils understand the importance of good punctuality and attendance. The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

You and your staff have created an inclusive, harmonious and friendly school. High proportions of pupils join your school at times other than starting Nursery. You have put in place well thought through approaches to help these pupils make a positive start to joining a new school. Pupils feel safe, grow in confidence and learn to behave well. This is because everyone in the school nurtures and meets pupils' social and emotional needs. You and your staff are reflective and search for the best practices to improve outcomes for pupils further. For example, you have reviewed your approach to teaching mathematics to identify different methods to improve pupils' arithmetic skills.

Overall, the school has successfully tackled the areas identified for improvement at the previous inspection. Your school's progress information shows that the vast majority of pupils across all year groups are making good progress from their starting points.

Where the new approach to teaching mathematics is working well, very effective links are made between pupils' arithmetical skills and using these to solve mathematical problems. This work is at an early stage of implementation and senior leaders need to check that it is being consistently applied across the school. While staff use questioning effectively to check pupils' knowledge, they sometimes miss opportunities to deepen pupils' learning. Pupils understand the 'purple polishing pens' approach, which is part of your marking policy. Where this is used well, it is bringing about improvements to pupils' work.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that the day-to-day safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Strong links with social services and other agencies support pupils' safety and well-being extremely well. Staff and governors have received appropriate safeguarding training, including how to keep pupils safe from the dangers of radicalisation and extremism. This training has had a positive impact on staff's safeguarding practice. However, leaders and governors have not responded promptly enough to ensure that the school's safeguarding documentation meets the most current national guidance.

Pupils are well taught about how to keep themselves safe, including when they are online. They have a good understanding of the different forms that bullying can take and know that staff will help them if they ever have concerns. Pupils say incidents of bullying are rare. The school's records show that incidents of misbehaviour and bullying are infrequent, and that these are quickly addressed by the staff. Pupils and staff agree that behaviour at the school is good.

Inspection findings

- You, your staff and governors have a good understanding of the community that you serve. The strong systems and support that you have put in place ensure that you effectively meet the needs of pupils joining the school at different points during the school year. At the same time, you carefully track the progress of pupils who have been in school from the start of their education.
- Your school improvement plan is largely well linked to the identified priorities in your detailed and accurate school self-evaluation. In places, there is not a sharp enough link between when actions are planned and subsequent checking activities to hold leaders accountable for them.
- Governors have a good understanding of the school's priorities and provide effective strategic challenge and support for leaders. They access relevant training to develop their skills. Recent training has developed their understanding of safeguarding responsibilities and of pupils' progress information. However, their monitoring of the impact of leaders' actions has sometimes not been sharp enough, for example when checking the impact of spending the pupil premium funding.

- You and your staff provide good levels of support for pupils who speak English as an additional language. For example, we saw a very practical cookery session where pupils were well supported when writing recipe instructions.
- From their starting points, children make good progress in Nursery and Reception classes. You have taken steps to improve the quality of the early years learning environment. The themed sheds with a range of interesting resources for children have increased opportunities for developing independent learning, creativity and communication skills.
- The teaching of phonics is well structured and teaching is carefully matched to pupils' level of development. As a result, the proportion of pupils who achieved the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check improved substantially in 2016 following a dip in results in the previous year.
- You have in place plans to improve further the quality of the teaching of writing across the school. However, there is still further work to be completed here. For example, during our joint visits to lessons, we noted that teachers' expectations for pupils, including the most able, were not consistently high enough, some resources used to support learning were not well matched to pupils' needs, and pupils' handwriting and presentation skills needed to be at a higher standard.
- The school's systems for measuring and recording pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics are generating useful information. Staff are using this information to match their teaching to meet pupils' needs more closely. Leaders use this information to good effect to check the progress of all pupils.
- The school's website does not meet the requirements for publishing information about the impact of the pupil premium spending and the school's strategy for the pupil premium in the current year.
- Overall attendance levels have improved and are now very close to those found nationally. This is because you have put in place a wide range of strategies to improve both attendance and punctuality. These are well understood by pupils, who know that being in school and on time has benefits for their education. You have also worked hard to help parents understand the need to avoid holidays during term-time.
- The school's feedback and marking system helps pupils to identify readily where they are demonstrating learning, and informs them how to improve their work further. This is generally well followed by teachers. However, some marking is not written in a way that provides a good model for pupils and is difficult for them to read.
- Pupils' behaviour at playtimes and moving around the school is good. Pupils are very well mannered, polite, courteous and friendly. The atmosphere in lessons is calm and usually purposeful. Sometimes, where teachers' expectations are not high enough, pupils do not produce as much work as they are capable of.
- You and your governors have benefited from local authority support to help tackle areas for school improvement. Support from the Ouseburn Learning Trust has helped to develop the quality of teaching.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- the school's safeguarding documentation meets the current national guidance
- your plans to improve the quality of teaching of writing are promptly implemented
- they hold leaders to account for checking promptly the impact of actions in the school improvement plan, including the spending of the pupil premium.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of Newcastle, the regional schools commissioner and the director of well-being, care and learning for Newcastle upon Tyne. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Michael Reeves
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this one-day inspection, I discussed the work of the school with you and the deputy headteacher. I talked with pupils about what it feels like to be a member of the school community. I observed and spoke with pupils during playtime and at other times during the day. I held discussions with a representative of the local authority and with two governors who were able to provide me with additional information. I also took into account school documentation, assessment information, policies and information posted on the school's website. I considered the responses to the two staff questionnaires and eight pupil questionnaires. Alongside you, I visited all classes to observe teaching and learning. We looked at pupils' work to help us evaluate the quality of teaching and learning over time. Behaviour and attendance records and information relating to safeguarding were also considered.