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Ms Bertie Hornibrook
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Hornibrook

Short inspection of Chadlington Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 15 November 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. As headteacher, you provide drive, vision and inspirational leadership which is recognised and highly valued by pupils, staff, parents and the local authority. You and your team are highly ambitious for the pupils in your care and are passionate about improving the quality of provision at Chadlington. Pupils and parents are rightly proud of the school and all that it achieves.

Chadlington is a small rural school which offers a nurturing and inclusive community atmosphere. Pupils are articulate, confident and display very positive attitudes towards learning, their school and each other. They apply themselves diligently to the tasks they are given and take pride in making their work the best it can be. From the early years onwards, the habits of good learning are established and pupils are keen to excel, particularly in their extended curriculum project work.

Cohorts at the school are often very small. This means that there can be variability in each year group and therefore caution is needed when making comparisons with national averages. Yet, historical progress information over time indicates that reading skills are particularly strong and pupils make progress in writing and mathematics that is at least in line with age-related expectations.

For pupils currently in the school, your improved assessment and tracking systems have enabled teachers to focus their teaching to improve writing and mathematical skills for pupils. You are aware that more could be done to ensure that a greater proportion of the most able pupils achieve the highest standards in writing and mathematics.

You have taken personal responsibility for the development of the school's first-class wider curriculum. Pupils of all ages are inspired to learn about science, technology, humanities and the arts through your programme of innovative 'We are...' projects. Governors, staff and pupils are rightly proud of the exceptionally high-quality work that pupils achieve. Parents were effusive in their praise for the school's curriculum and your approach to teaching. For example, one parent commented, 'Our child has grown in confidence and is thriving academically. She thoroughly enjoys going and engaging in all elements of the stimulating and broad syllabus.' Another added, 'I am most impressed by the quality of teaching which seems to allow children to grow and thrive... Finding that creative freedom and nurturing is the hallmark of good teaching, in my view, and Chadlington School has this quality in bucketloads.'

Pupils are well known, as individuals, by staff and their peers and the school takes great care to support the academic and pastoral development of them all. Pupils and their parents value how staff willingly offer extra time to enrich and extend learning. In addition, the wider community, through the 'Friends of Chadlington School', raises significant funding to subsidise enrichment activities and provide computing equipment for the children. Consequently, as well as regular Forest School learning experiences, the school offers a wealth of trips and visits to places such as the Lake District, the Houses of Parliament, Stonehenge and the sailing ship 'The Matthew'. Within school, pupils value opportunities to take on extra responsibility such as participating in the school parliament, becoming involved in sporting competitions or buddying younger pupils at the dinner table during lunchtimes. Supporting pupils' personal development and welfare is clearly a strength of the school.

You provide governors with a detailed understanding of the school and use accurate tracking and assessment information to identify strengths and areas for development. Your school improvement planning is concise, has clear targets and is appropriately focused. Consequently, standards are improving and all groups of current pupils are making strong progress.

Leaders and governors have responded particularly well to the areas for improvement identified during the previous inspection. Researching evidence-based educational approaches and working in partnership with other local schools, you actively seek and evaluate new initiatives and teaching approaches, implementing only those methods that would be most effective in your school. As a result, improved teaching has led to better outcomes, particularly for the lower attaining and vulnerable pupils. Staff morale is high.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. There is a culture of vigilance and records are detailed and of high quality. There are clear, well-understood systems in place to manage safeguarding requirements. All staff have up-to-date training to an appropriate level and so they know what to do should they be worried about a pupil. Governors are very knowledgeable and work closely with staff to ensure that the work to keep pupils safe is given a high priority and meets current requirements.

Pupils' attendance has improved and is now in line with the national average. You recognise that some groups, including disadvantaged pupils, have had poor attendance rates in the past, and the school has worked closely with outside agencies and families to support improvements. Bullying and discrimination are extremely rare. Almost all pupils and parents report that children feel safe and well looked after at Chadlington Primary School and they know whom to go to should they have any concerns. As several of the pupils told me during the inspection, 'It feels nice to be here,' and, 'We make good friends here.'

Inspection findings

- You give the school strong, purposeful and highly effective leadership. Your vision for school improvement rightly focuses on providing a rich and creative curriculum, together with an exceptionally caring and nurturing community environment. The school's values, 'Let your light shine: imagine, believe, achieve,' are at the heart of all it does. One parent spoke for many when they commented, 'Our children love attending Chadlington School; this is down to the wonderful, caring and family-like environment it has! It really is a special place.'
- The collaborative leadership team works effectively to support and challenge the quality of teaching and learning across the school. Regular classroom visits, training and joint planning have encouraged the sharing of ideas and resources, and supported staff development.
- Leaders and governors have taken effective steps to address the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. The quality of teaching seen during this inspection, historic progress information, the school's tracking system and the work in pupils' books all validate that the teaching of English and mathematics in the school is securely good. Reading skills across the school are particularly high, and writing and mathematics skills have improved since the previous inspection.

- You recognised the need to further improve the quality of teaching and learning in writing and mathematics, and are doing so. The work in current pupils' books, together with the learning witnessed during the inspection, clearly evidence the strong progress that children are now making across the school. Older pupils develop a depth of knowledge and understanding in mathematics. In English, they produce regular extended pieces of written work. Staff are ensuring that this written work incorporates pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar skills. Leaders and governors are aware that more still needs to be done to challenge the most able pupils to achieve the highest levels in their writing and mathematics.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work well together to support disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Effective assessment and tracking systems, together with timely interventions and support, ensure that these pupils make strong progress.
- There are some outstanding levels of challenge and achievement across the wider curriculum, particularly in science and technology. Pupils have been inspired through working with visiting scientists and engineers on activities such as sending balloons into the upper atmosphere to capture pictures showing the curvature of the Earth, building their own kit car, and evaluating animal adaptations and evolution. Portfolios of immaculately presented work evidence the very high standards achieved by the most able pupils in these projects.
- The rich curriculum ensures that pupils achieve similarly high standards in the arts. All pupils participate in ballet and an annual drama production at the local theatre. In addition, all key stage 2 pupils learn a brass instrument, some visited The Royal Ballet and many worked with a professional animator from Aardman Animation studios to produce their own animation. High-quality school videos celebrate pupils' achievement through these activities.
- Leaders have worked hard to ensure high-quality provision in the early years. As a result, the indoor and outdoor learning environments offer a well-organised range of bright and stimulating learning zones. Children play well together and staff ensure that an engaging range of activities encourages all aspects of learning, promoting thinking, creativity and physical development as well as developing literacy and mathematical skills.
- Leaders and governors have secured a very high-quality outdoor classroom for key stage 1, but are aware that learning in this area could be improved through the provision of richer stimuli to encourage pupils to apply their literacy and numeracy skills. Leaders have plans to improve this area and also to develop an additional outdoor area for the lower key stage 2 class.
- Governors are an enthusiastic and highly effective team. They know the school well and offer useful support and challenge to the headteacher and her team. They are reflective and review their work, making changes to increase their impact where necessary. Aware that their roles and responsibilities could be better defined, governors recently conducted an audit of their skills, restructured their committees and sought new members to boost their existing range of experience and skills.

- In 2016, the proportion of children that achieved a good level of development by the end of the early years was much higher than in previous years and well above the national average. Although in 2016 fewer Year 1 pupils achieved the expected standard in the phonics check than in most schools, over time the standard of literacy has clearly improved. High-quality teaching of phonics enables pupils to become confident and skilled readers. The proportions of pupils achieving the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 were above average, although the proportion of those working at a greater depth was below national figures. Standards by the end of Year 6 have been in line with national expectations for many years. In 2016, the proportion of Year 6 pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics was much higher than the national figure, with achievement in reading being particularly high.
- Teachers have high expectations and use their good subject and assessment knowledge to design stimulating lessons. They focus clearly on intended learning and give pupils useful verbal and written feedback, which pupils use to modify and improve their work. Teachers routinely use high-quality questioning and discussion very effectively to probe and develop pupils' understanding. As a result, pupils clearly enjoy their time in school and are highly motivated to do well.
- Phonics teaching is consistent across key stage 1 and Reception classes so that pupils achieve well. Teachers have strong subject knowledge and high expectations, and are skilled in modelling phonics techniques to the pupils. For example, in Reception Year, children enthusiastically worked in pairs to segment and blend a range of complicated words. In key stage 1, the same techniques were being used to challenge pupils in pairs to read more complex sentences and reflect on their own writing.
- Leaders carefully monitor attendance and work closely with pupils and their families to make improvements. Consequently, overall attendance has significantly improved recently, particularly for disadvantaged pupils. Punctuality is promoted well; pupils of all ages were seen to delight in running to school to make it over the small wooden 'attendance bridge' to be warmly greeted by name.
- The overwhelming majority of parents are particularly supportive of the school and report having good relationships with the headteacher and staff. A very small minority reported that they would like more information and easier communication with the school. Leaders and governors are aware of this and have plans to improve communication and redevelop the school's website.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- challenge for the most able pupils in writing and mathematics is securely embedded across the school
- the external learning environment continues to be improved, to provide a richer level of challenge and promote outstanding progress
- communication with parents continues to be improved, including the redevelopment of the school's website.

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

Yours sincerely

Matthew Newberry
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this visit, I looked closely at specific aspects of the school's provision including: safeguarding arrangements; the progress children make in the early years; the achievement of pupils in writing and mathematics; and how effectively the school meets the needs of specific groups, including disadvantaged pupils and the most able. I met with you, the collaborative leadership team, the chair and vice-chair the governing body, and a representative of the local authority. I visited all of the classes jointly with you to look at teaching and learning. I looked at pupils' work in their exercise books. I had a meeting with a small group of pupils and spoke to several of them informally at lunchtime. I took into account 38 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, as well as speaking to a number of parents at the beginning of the day. I evaluated a range of documents, including pupils' progress information and safeguarding policies, procedures and checks.