

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



9 January 2017

Dr Yvonne Watts
Interim Executive Headteacher
Crick Primary School
Main Road
Crick
Northampton
Northamptonshire
NN6 7TU

Dear Dr Watts

Short inspection of Crick Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 13 December 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 October 2011.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

The substantive headteacher, deputy headteacher and senior teacher are all currently taking maternity leave. Last year, governors were proactive in appointing you as an interim executive headteacher. An assistant headteacher and a senior teacher also took up their posts in September 2016. They are ably supporting you, ensuring that leadership is strong during the substantive headteacher's maternity leave.

During the summer term 2016, you and the incoming assistant headteacher and senior teacher held several meetings with the senior staff who were due to take maternity leave. The aim of the meetings was to look closely at the strengths and areas for development at the school. You analysed the outcomes for pupils at the end of 2016 and attended staff meetings to draw up a development plan alongside the substantive leadership team and staff. This was intended to ensure that developments in the school would continue during their time of absence. You and the current leadership team also spent time during the summer ensuring that plans were in place so that no time for development was lost this term.

Crick Primary School is a school that strives to be at the heart of the community it serves. During the inspection, pupils attended a Christingle service at the local church and parents packed the school hall during the afternoon performance of the Christmas production. Pupils can participate in the village scarecrow festival or the canal festival. Pupils are involved in planting saplings and wild flowers at Crick Wood, helping them to value this local resource.

School leaders have ensured that the areas for improvement raised by inspectors at the last inspection have been addressed. Leaders were asked to raise attainment of boys, particularly in reading at key stage 1 and to ensure that policies and training relating to health and safety were undertaken. Since then, the results of the phonics check at the end of Year 1 have improved year on year so that by the end of 2016, more pupils attained the expected standard than did nationally. This includes more boys attaining the standard than was seen nationally. By the end of key stage 1 in 2016, early information shows that the proportion of pupils attaining the expected standard exceeded that seen nationally for each of reading, writing and mathematics, and the proportion achieving a greater depth of understanding was in line with the national figure. Assessment information shows that there was little disparity between boys and girls, except in writing, where girls outperformed boys.

Governors are involved with monitoring health and safety, and the local authority now audits the school's health and safety requirements annually. Leaders ensure that staff receive training and that risk assessments are undertaken.

Staff value the professional development they are encouraged to take up. All the staff I spoke with recognise that they have an important part to play in the developments the school is making. The staff are proud to work at Crick Primary School and enjoy the supportive ethos.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding is a very high priority for leaders, staff and governors alike. You make sure that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. All the appropriate vetting checks take place before adults start to work with pupils in school. Safeguarding records show that referrals are made to the local authority if leaders have a concern over a pupil's welfare. Staff and governors have received up-to-date training in safeguarding.

Every pupil who responded to the pupil online survey said that they feel safe in school and they would have someone to talk to if they were worried. Pupils I spoke with were able to explain clearly how to keep themselves safe. They are taught about water safety, as the Grand Union Canal runs close to the village of Crick. They are able to describe how to keep themselves safe when they are using modern technology.

Inspection findings

- You and your leadership team have formed an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for improvement in the short time you have been in post. This is because the period of transition from the substantive leaders was well managed and information was effectively shared.
- The local authority has no concerns about the school, but the local authority's adviser is providing additional support to the school to ensure that leaders and governors are fully supported during the absence of the substantive leadership team.
- Since the previous inspection, outcomes for children in the early years have improved. The proportion of children achieving a good level of development has increased steadily since 2013, so that it is now above the national average. During our visit to the Reception class, we saw children fully engaged in their learning. The teacher had skilfully organised learning activities that would capture their imaginations. They had received a message from an elf and were excited to write to Santa Claus in reply.
- School leaders have astutely identified that by the end of 2016, there had been an uncharacteristic fall in the progress pupils make in key stage 2 writing. You and your leadership team have ensured that you have introduced clear strategies to improve pupils' progress in writing. These include, but are not restricted to, certain strategies to ensure that pupils know what they are learning, are enabled to make links with previous learning, can understand how to improve their work and are able to describe the progress they have made.
- During our tour of classrooms to see the learning that was taking place, pupils in Years 5 and 6 were able to explain to me how their writing is improving this year. They described writing as 'fun'. Several pupils could explain how teachers' approaches to teaching writing this year are enabling them to make better progress. We also saw disadvantaged pupils, of all abilities, being successfully supported in class to make the progress of which they are capable.
- In a mathematics lesson, we saw pupils being effectively supported by a teaching assistant, grappling with an investigation that the teacher had set for them. They were using their growing knowledge and understanding of fractions to good effect to solve the problem.
- Teachers ensure that pupils have the opportunity to write at length in a range of subjects. For example, in one class, pupils were retelling the story of 'The Three Billy Goats' but placing it in an Egyptian setting to link with their recent Egyptians topic. Such links across the curriculum have been strengthened this year.
- Pupils' books, however, show that teachers are not consistently insisting that pupils present their work to a high standard. Some pupils do not reliably set work out neatly and work is sometimes scribbled out. In mathematics work, where the use of rulers would normally be appropriate, rulers are not consistently used. In such situations, for example in work on symmetry, inaccuracies result. There is scope for teachers to raise their expectations of pupils in this regard.

- Pupils at the early stages of reading use their developing knowledge of phonics along with other cues, such as looking at the picture, to help them make sense of the text. As they become more confident and accomplished readers, pupils have distinct preferences for genres and authors. Pupils at all stages of reading can explain why they like books. The school library is a bright and welcoming space for pupils to use.
- Attendance has declined overall over the past three years. You have identified a very small number of pupils who have had extended absence from school for specific reasons. Leaders were already motivating pupils to attend regularly by presenting awards at the end of the school year. You have increased their frequency so the pupils will be rewarded for good attendance termly. Current attendance data for this school year shows that attendance is improving and is broadly in line with the national average for primary schools.
- The majority of parents who spoke with me or responded to the online survey, Parent View, were positive about the school. They particularly mentioned how happy their children were.
- While several parents praised how well the school communicated with them, a few parents raised concerns about communication. The concerns particularly related to information about the changes in leadership or to times when there was something specific related to their child. Parents mentioned, for example, incidents involving other pupils, including alleged bullying. During the inspection, I observed pupils on the playground over lunchtime and I spoke with several pupils. Every pupil who responded to the online survey and all the pupils I spoke with said that bullying was rare and that if they had concerns about bullying, an adult would deal with it for them.
- Pupils enjoy the opportunities they have to represent the school and to take responsibility around school on a day-to-day basis. For example, pupils can act as library monitors or helpers who set up the school hall for lunch and assist the youngest children. Pupils can represent their class as elected members of the school council. They can learn to play a musical instrument and they enjoy visits to the theatre. The pupils I spoke with told me that their responsibilities and experiences help to prepare them for life after primary school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- action is taken to accelerate the progress that pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and the most able, make in writing by ensuring that:
 - the strategies that have recently been implemented are fully embedded
 - teachers have the highest expectations of the quality of writing and presentation of pupils' work, whatever their ability.
- Communication with parents is timely and of high quality.

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

Yours sincerely

Di Mullan
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this short inspection, I met with you, the assistant headteacher, the senior teacher with responsibility for English and six other members of staff. I met with the chair of the governing body and another governor. I spoke with a representative of the local authority on the telephone and met with a group of four pupils. I observed pupils on the playground during lunchtime and spoke with four groups of pupils during this time. I heard two pupils read. I observed the learning that was taking place in every class with you and the assistant headteacher. I spoke with parents as they brought their children to school in the morning. I took account of 41 responses to the online survey, Parent View, the 16 response to the pupil survey and the 10 responses to the staff survey. I scrutinised a range of school documentation, including that relating to the progress that pupils make, minutes of meetings of the governing body, the school self-evaluation document and the school development plan. I scrutinised the single central record and documents relating to safeguarding.

This inspection focused particularly on:

- whether leaders had addressed the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection
- how effectively leaders were addressing the recent dip in progress in writing at key stage 2
- whether attendance is improving, particularly for disadvantaged pupils
- how effectively leaders and governors are ensuring that the school continues to develop during the absence of the substantive leadership team
- whether safeguarding is effective.