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19 January 2017

Linda Hack
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Dear Mrs Hack

Short inspection of FitzHerbert CofE (Aided) Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 11 January 2017, 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 your school was judged to be good in May 2012.

This school continues to be good.

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

All of the parents spoken to during the inspection, and all of those who completed Parent View, were full of praise for your school. Time and again they used the term 'family' to express the quality of the relationships between the children of different ages and between children and staff. As one parent wrote, 'I am so proud that my children go to this school. They are safe, happy and love attending – I love being part of the wider school family too.'

You, and your senior teacher, deserve much of the credit for ensuring that the school continues to serve its community so successfully. Since taking up your post, you have identified the right priorities and taken the right actions to ensure that the school continues to improve. Along with the governors, you are insistent that FitzHerbert CofE Primary is a small school with big ambition. Your aspiration is that all pupils will thrive academically and personally; that they will be happy and successful.

Together with your colleagues, you have made sure that the faith-based ethos of the school is at the heart of its work. The strong links with the local community have been crucial in ensuring that the school lives out its Christian values. It is an inclusive school that sees everyone as special.

Teachers check very carefully each individual pupil's work and progress. They plan lessons that meet successfully the range of ages and abilities within each class in this small school.

The previous inspection reported that adults did not use questioning effectively to improve pupils' understanding and skills. You addressed this weakness by providing training and support that helped adults understand how questions can, for example, seek ideas and suggestions as well correct answers. Evidence from my visits to lessons demonstrated convincingly that staff now use questioning to promote good learning.

In response to the higher expectations set in the revised national curriculum, you acted swiftly to improve the pupils' reading skills, particularly their comprehension skills. The resources you have introduced are ensuring that pupils read books that offer the right amount of challenge. Pupils enjoy these books and teachers are able to check carefully how frequently pupils read and how well they understand their books.

The small number of pupils in each year group, together with the relatively high number of pupils who join the school midway through a key stage, results in some variation in pupil outcomes at the end of each academic year. It is clear, however, that pupils make good progress from their starting points and typically achieve standards at least in line with the national averages.

At the time of the previous inspection, the pupils' behaviour and attendance were highlighted as particular strengths of the school. These remain very positive outcomes. Pupils are proud of their school and love talking about the many exciting activities planned into the curriculum. They have a strong sense of community and the older pupils show great respect towards the younger pupils in the school.

There remain two aspects of leadership and management to be improved. The school does not publish all of the required information about its provision and outcomes on its website. This omission means that parents, or prospective parents, do not get a full picture of the school's work and its performance.

A second area for development reflects the over-reliance placed upon you and your senior teacher to drive school improvement. You have recently begun defining the leadership roles and responsibilities of other members of staff. This initiative is at an early stage, however, so its impact on the quality of provision and pupil outcomes is still at an early stage.

Safeguarding is effective.

The arrangements for safeguarding pupils are effective. The leadership team, school staff and governors are fully aware of their duty to keep pupils safe. All staff have been trained on safeguarding and child protection. They report promptly any concerns they may have about pupils and work well with parents to ensure that

pupils are kept safe. Appropriate records are kept of any issues that arise, the actions taken and the impact of these actions.

Pupils told me that they receive interesting and helpful guidance from experts to help them understand the potential risks they may encounter when they are near water, walking or cycling, approached by strangers or using digital technologies. They have huge respect for the adults who work in the school and would readily seek help with any issues at school, or at home, that were upsetting them.

Inspection findings

- In 2016, pupils' outcomes in writing were below average at the end of Years 2 and 6. You and the senior teacher have a strong understanding of the factors that led to these outcomes.
- Steps taken to improve the pupils' ability to apply what they learn about grammar, punctuation and spelling in their written work have had a very positive impact. The focus on improving handwriting has also been beneficial and pupils were proud to show me the work in their books. We looked closely at pupils' writing in all year groups. Pupils' progress in writing is good and many are writing with skills higher than those typical for their age.
- You have successfully addressed the weakness in questioning identified in the previous inspection report.
- Since your appointment, you and your senior teacher have shouldered responsibility for most of the key leadership roles. This has partly been a consequence of changes of staff. You recognise that others, including non-teaching staff, should play a bigger part in driving improvement. Developing their leadership roles is an identified priority in your self-evaluation.
- You have not published on the school website all of the information required by the Department for Education. Some of the information, for example how you use the pupil premium funding, is documented and can be quickly uploaded on to the website. You are now aware of the omissions and determined to address this issue with urgency.
- In all of the lessons we visited, pupils were working with enthusiasm. Behaviour in the dining hall, and on the playground, was equally positive. Pupils say they feel safe and all of the parents who shared their views agree that the school takes very good care of their children.
- You and your staff track closely how well disadvantaged pupils are learning. You know exactly how pupil premium funding is being used to ensure that they make good progress, attend school regularly and participate in all of the exciting extra-curricular activities.
- Parents rightly value how effectively you use the school grounds, visits to local places of interest and invite visitors to the school to enrich the school's curriculum. On the day of the inspection, all of the key stage 2 children were taking part in the Young Voices event in Sheffield. It was a privilege to hear them singing for us before they set off.

- Despite its small size, the school excels in sporting activities. Levels of participation are very high and the range of activities impressive. FitzHerbert is one of just 12 schools in Derbyshire to have achieved the gold standard in a national sports award programme.
- Children in the early years enjoy a curriculum that very successfully meets their needs. They work happily inside and outside the classroom and have lots of opportunities to pursue learning activities that interest them. For example, seeing just how windy it was, one girl chose to use cloth, wool and sticky tape to make and fly her own kite. Not surprisingly, other children were keen to learn from her and join in the fun.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the school's website includes all of the information required by the Department for Education
- subject leaders, and other staff, receive the necessary training and opportunities to enable them to contribute more effectively to school improvement.

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

Yours sincerely

Anthony O'Malley
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you, the senior teacher and other members of staff to discuss the school's effectiveness. I also met with three governors and a representative of the local authority. I met with a group of pupils and talked with others around the school and during lessons. I observed teaching and learning in all classes and heard five pupils read. I looked at work in pupils' books in all subjects, giving particularly close attention to the quality of their written work.

I examined documents, including those linked to keeping the pupils safe, the school's self-evaluation document and the school improvement plan. I considered 18 responses to Parent View, together with the views of parents gathered as they brought their children to school. In addition, I took account of the views of 10 members of staff provided through their questionnaire.