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Mrs Rebecca Gore
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Dear Mrs Gore

Short inspection of The Croft Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 23 February 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 the school was judged to be good in July 2013.

This school continues to be good.

Despite the school experiencing recurrent changes in leadership, the good quality of education in the school has been maintained since the last inspection. Governors have now secured the leadership of the school. Their actions have been welcomed by parents to ensure that the school continues to thrive.

Since your arrival, you have quickly galvanised the team, making sure that the quality of education that pupils receive is the best that it can be. You have the support of your staff, who share your vision and aspirations for the school. Governors describe you as 'measured, fair and determined'. They are confident that under your leadership the school will continue to blossom.

Leaders know the school and its pupils very well. You are completely aware of the areas that require improvement, such as boys' writing, and of the need to ensure that teachers' expectations of pupils' work are set at the same high standard seen in their English work. Together, you have set about tackling these areas with a sense of urgency. Governors are also fully aware of what needs to improve. However, they are not sufficiently rigorous in holding leaders to account for the quality of education that pupils receive.

Pupils in most year groups make good progress as they move through the school, especially in writing and mathematics. This is because they are taught well by teachers who use their strong subject knowledge to prepare work that excites and

stimulates them. Consequently, pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to their work, are curious and want to get better. Pupils behave well in lessons and during breaktimes and lunchtimes. They are polite and respectful to staff and each other. Pupils talk positively about their school experience. They describe how they enjoy school as 'teachers are fantastic and make learning fun'. As a result, they attend school regularly and make strong progress.

Most parents who submitted comments either through conversation, letter or via the online inspection questionnaire are positive about the quality of education and care that their children receive. However, some parents comment that they would welcome better communication between home and school. Nevertheless, many parents are complimentary about the school, typical comments describing how The Croft is 'a wonderful village school, children are obviously joyful to go in, many skip in' and 'The Croft is a fabulous primary school, a real asset to both the pupils and the local community'.

At the beginning of the inspection, we agreed on the key lines of enquiry to be considered during the day. These included how the school ensures that pupils are safe, how effective leaders are, including subject leaders, in securing good progress for pupils and the effectiveness of leadership in the early years provision. These key lines of enquiry are considered below.

Safeguarding is effective.

You ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Records are detailed and of high quality. The school's policies and procedures take account of the latest statutory guidance, which is adhered to by staff. Leaders work closely with external agencies and decisive action is taken when concerns arise.

You and the governing body ensure that staff receive high-quality training. For example, all staff have received training to identify potential child sexual exploitation and female genital mutilation. Consequently, staff can quickly spot any concerns and take action with confidence.

You and your governors fully understand the importance of recruiting staff safely. Together, you ensure that all staff are carefully vetted prior to commencing employment.

Pupils explain with confidence how they can share with an adult any concerns or worries they may have. They feel safe and describe how the school is a fun and happy place to be. Pupils have a secure understanding of the importance of keeping safe. For example, they understand how to keep safe when using mobile phones or the internet and know what to do if they have concerns.

Parents speak positively about the safety of their children in school, describing that when they have raised concerns, they have been tackled quickly. Nevertheless, the school is not complacent and is aware of the need to remain vigilant to ensure that pupils are kept safe.

Inspection findings

- School leaders demonstrate drive and a determination for the school to forge ahead and continue to improve. Leaders carefully check the learning of pupils through monitoring activities which include observing learning, looking at pupils' work and tracking their progress. Teachers are skilled as a result of high-quality training and guidance provided by leaders. Consequently, the quality of teaching is good and pupils make strong progress.
- The previous inspection report highlighted the need to improve the monitoring skills of subject leaders in English and mathematics in order to make further improvements in pupil progress. This was quickly tackled following the inspection. Subject leaders received high-quality guidance on monitoring the quality of teaching and learning in their subjects, which enables them to undertake this monitoring role accurately and confidently. They carefully analyse progress information for all groups of pupils to ensure that provision precisely meets their needs. The impact can be clearly seen in the overall achievement of pupils in these subjects. Leaders are rightly proud of recognition by the Department for Education which they have recently received for pupils' outcomes in writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6.
- However, leaders are acutely aware that the quality of pupils' work in other subjects does not mirror that seen in their English work well enough. In addition, they know that there remain small differences within groups, especially between boys and girls in their writing. Inspection evidence confirms that leaders are tackling these with sufficient rigour. For example, changes have been made to the curriculum to enthuse boys and encourage them to write for a range of different purposes. The effects were seen across different classes in such activities as 'messages in a bottle', undertaken by children in the Reception class.
- Governors have a range of expertise to support the school. However, they do not hold school leaders to account with sufficient rigour for the quality of education that pupils receive. They do not probe deep enough and do not ask those searching questions to check with leaders what is working, or not working, well and why. Nevertheless, leaders are striving to make the necessary changes, and this is clearly reflected in the strong progress that pupils make.
- Children enter early years with skills which are just below typical for their age, particularly in writing and number. As a result of good teaching, children make good progress. Outcomes are rising year on year, and by the time they leave the early years the proportion of children achieving a good level of development is above the national average. This ensures that they are well prepared as they enter Year 1.
- Teachers in the early years demonstrate a determination for constant improvement. They carefully analyse progress information to check how well children are doing. From this analysis they work hard to ensure that planned provision effectively meets the needs of children. For example, teachers are aware that boys' writing needs to improve. As a result, they have adapted the curriculum to ensure that it excites and motivates both boys and girls. In another example, their recent topic on pirates ignited children's imaginations, resulting in

some high-quality work. Teachers carefully consider how they link learning across a range of subjects. For instance, children have completed a range of activities based on the text 'The magic porridge pot'. This includes children successfully retelling the story in their own words, using their early writing skills to record aspects of the story and demonstrating their mathematical understanding in making graphs to depict their favourite porridge topping.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- any remaining differences are quickly diminished in the achievement and progress of groups, especially boys, in writing
- teachers' high expectations of pupils' writing in their English work are also found consistently across a wider range of other subjects
- governors hold leaders more robustly to account for the quality of education that pupils receive.

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

Yours sincerely

Jen Southall

Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, your subject leaders for English and mathematics and your teachers in the early years provision. We talked about the improvements which have been made since the last inspection. I carried out a 'learning walk' with you and your subject leaders through classes, where we viewed pupils' work. I also held discussions with four governors, including the chair of the governing body, and talked informally to pupils. I held a telephone conversation with an officer from the local authority.

A wide range of documentation was looked at, including the school's evaluation of its own performance and information relating to pupils' current achievement and progress. I also checked the effectiveness of the school's safeguarding arrangements and attendance information.

I spoke to parents at the start of the day and considered written correspondence submitted. I also took into account the 52 responses to the online survey 'Parent View' and considered additional comments received from parents. I took into account 16 responses to the staff survey and 63 responses completed by pupils issued during the inspection.