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Mrs Debra Davies
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Davies

Short inspection of Christ Church CofE Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 23 May 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 December 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained, and improved, the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Groups of parents, pupils and governors spoken to during the inspection recognise the huge improvements that you, your leadership team and staff have made to the school since the last inspection.

You, along with your leadership team and governors, aim to ensure that every pupil is highly valued at Christ Church CofE Primary School. Leaders are determined to provide the highest quality of education and, through their knowledge of each pupil, recognise when further support is required to help pupils achieve well. The learning environment is purposeful, calm and respectful. Pupils' behaviour is good and pupils are polite and well-mannered. There is a welcoming and warm feeling to the school, with strong relationships between staff and pupils. Parents say, 'The school is well led by a nurturing and caring deputy and headteacher' and appreciate the way 'staff go above and beyond to ensure that children receive the very best education'. They are also delighted with the support offered to pupils transferring from other schools. A number of parents stated that the school is 'fantastic'.

Since the last inspection your leadership team has reviewed your assessment procedures and devised an innovative and comprehensive system which has been shared with all staff. Leaders use information recorded in this assessment system

(including pupils' past and current achievements) to identify individual pupils' learning needs. Teachers swiftly devise learning activities to meet these identified needs so that no child is allowed to fall behind. As a result, current pupils are on track to improve on last year's end-of-key-stage results, especially increasing the proportion of pupils attaining standards at a greater depth.

Pupils state that they enjoy the fun way that teachers plan lessons. Parents and pupils value the range and variety of extra-curricular activities, which include residential visits, cooking and the pre-school sports club, 'morning mayhem'.

You and your team have taken effective action to address the areas for improvement since the last inspection. Pupils' self-assessment of their writing shows a real understanding of their learning. They accurately identify their strengths and weaknesses and, as a result, are beginning to address the aspects which will lead to greater improvements. Pupils have a good understanding of the raised expectations of teachers to find things out for themselves or to use a variety of support strategies to help them address misunderstandings. They shared the rhyme 'three before me' – showing their understanding of whole-school agreed procedures to ask peers before asking the teacher for help.

You were also asked to extend the challenge for the most able pupils. Strategies introduced to further develop most-able pupils' reading, writing and mathematics are beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' learning. Pupils' books show their use of developing vocabulary, increased variation in sentence structure and improving grammatical awareness. The focus on these aspects of literacy ensures that pupils are combining the secretarial aspects of writing and their creativity to produce writing of a higher quality. However, we discussed the need to balance the presentation of pupils' writing with the changes that pupils are making to improve the content of their work. In mathematics, teaching and learning needs to be 'tweaked' to ensure that pupils are consistently challenged to explain how and why they have solved problems in order to meet higher standards.

Leaders have improved teaching and learning in the early years by reorganising the classrooms and outdoor area to ensure that distinct spaces have been created for children to access the different areas of learning. Activities now focus more on each of the required areas of learning. The teaching of phonics is particularly effective, but at times, the focus on what children are learning is not sharp enough and the children are not challenged enough to extend their learning.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Safeguarding procedures are fit for purpose. Leaders and governors fulfil statutory requirements when appointing new members of staff.

Parents and pupils feel that the school is a safe place to be. Leaders, including governors, ensure that staff receive high-quality training and, as a result, staff know how to recognise the signs and symptoms of abuse. Staff are very clear about the school's procedures for reporting and recording any concerns they have regarding the safeguarding of pupils.

Pupils are taught about how to stay safe online. Leaders have introduced and implemented clear procedures for internet safety. Pupils understand the dangers associated with internet use and report concerns to staff.

Attendance rates of all pupils and groups of pupils are currently in line with, or better than, national averages. Leaders have implemented very good procedures to tackle absenteeism. Leaders take seriously their responsibility for pupils being safe and attending regularly, and are aware that the significant absence of a small number of pupils last year was due to very specific individual circumstances.

Inspection findings

- Pupils at Christ Church CofE Primary School make good progress from their starting points. Your analysis of pupil performance and progress in 2016 was robust and identified the successes in pupils' writing. It also highlighted the weaknesses in the progress made by significant groups of pupils, including higher prior-attaining (particularly boys) and disadvantaged pupils. The inspection focused on several key lines of enquiry, which included the progress of these two groups of pupils.
- The first key line of enquiry considered the progress and attainment of the most-able pupils. In response to analysis of last year's data, leaders have identified high prior-attaining pupils to enable better monitoring of their current attainment and progress. Recent data shows that greater proportions of the most able pupils, particularly boys, are progressing well and attaining the higher levels expected in school.
- Strategies introduced to improve pupils' writing (through pupil self-evaluation) are beginning to have a positive impact on standards but are not used consistently across all classes. Pupils are taught how to edit and improve their writing independently. Where these strategies have been implemented effectively teachers have high expectations for their use and increasing numbers of the most-able pupils are reaching even higher standards. In these classes, pupils' books show controlled vocabulary use, which creates the appropriate atmosphere, and improved sentence structure to create specific effects. There is an imaginative use of connectives and other linguistic devices to add interest to writing.
- In mathematics, leaders have introduced opportunities for pupils to develop their mathematical thinking. This is having a positive effect on pupils' improving reasoning skills, particularly of the most able. Pupils' books show that, where the needs of the most-able pupils are met and provision includes greater challenge with higher teacher expectation, pupils are tackling complex mathematical

questions successfully. However, this good practice is not consistently applied across the school.

- Most-able pupils, particularly boys, read with intonation and confidence. They have good strategies to read unknown words and their developing vocabulary enables them to have a good guess at the meaning of them. Their comprehension skills, seen in specific reading logs, are developing in structure and detail. Teachers have adapted the curriculum to include more boy-friendly texts and this is having an improving impact on boys' enjoyment of reading. However, in a small number of classes the challenge to read questions is too great for the majority of pupils, although the most-able applied themselves well to the higher expectations.
- A second line of enquiry focused on the progress and attainment of pupils eligible for the pupil premium funding, particularly in the early years and in key stage 2. In 2016, progress for these pupils was significantly weaker than similar pupils nationally.
- Leaders have used the school's tracking system to identify pupils at risk of falling behind challenging targets. Opportunities are provided for in-class support and booster sessions before or after school to meet individuals and group learning needs. Pupils and teachers discuss mathematical topics in advance of the class lesson, so that pupils have a good basic understanding of the new topic to be taught. Leaders also provide a range of social and emotional support to ensure that these pupils are fully involved in the school's wide range of opportunities. This provision is having a very positive effect on the progress and attainment of the pupils involved. School data shows that these pupils now make at least good progress.
- In the early years, the teaching of phonics is very effective and, as a result, children make good progress. The teaching of the other areas of learning is less effective and children, particularly those eligible for the pupil premium funding, are not challenged to meet higher expectations.
- The deputy headteacher and special educational needs coordinator work very closely together to monitor the progress of those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities who are also entitled to pupil premium funding. This close working relationship helps to ensure that teaching and learning for these pupils is well matched to their needs. High-quality teaching and support for class activities is given, and continues, until staff are sure that the pupil has fully understood the concepts and aspects of learning covered. Current school data shows that these pupils make good progress.
- Governors monitor pupil premium expenditure much more closely since the beginning of the school year. They value the impact studies undertaken by the deputy headteacher, which indicate which interventions and learning programmes are most effective. These enable the governors to ensure that pupil premium funding is providing value for money.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- the most-able pupils are further challenged in writing and mathematics through consistent expectations of the presentation of work and further development of pupils' reasoning skills
- in the early years activities selected by children as well as those led by adults focus more on what children are learning rather than on what they are doing.

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

Yours sincerely

Ian Shackleton
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and your senior leadership team, parents, five members of the governing body and spoke to the school's improvement partner over the phone. In addition, I talked with small groups of pupils around the school, in lessons and formally in two groups.

I observed teaching and learning in various classes jointly with the headteacher and scrutinised writing, mathematics and topic books from disadvantaged and most-able pupils across the school. I particularly scrutinised the books of pupils in Years 5 and 6, given that pupils in these year groups and their teachers were absent from school on a residential visit to Northumberland. In addition, I listened to pupils read.

I examined and discussed a range of documents, including those relating to attendance, behaviour and safeguarding. I looked at the school's self-evaluation of how well it is doing, the school's improvement priorities and the school's assessment information. I reviewed the school's website. I considered 32 responses from parents to Ofsted's free-text survey.