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2 November 2017

Mrs Elaine Palmer and Mrs Sarah Clements
Co-headteachers
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Dear Mrs Palmer and Mrs Clements

Short inspection of Chalkwell Hall Infant School

Following my visit to the school on 18 October 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 May 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. You have created a school where standards are high, and pupils behave well and develop an early love of learning. You work closely with the junior school that shares the site, so that pupils move easily from one school to the next as they progress from key stage 1 into key stage 2. For example, the junior school headteacher is a member of your governing body and you are members of his. A new post has recently been created so that an assistant headteacher now works across both schools, with a particular focus on ensuring continuity for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

The governing body has taken a very considered approach to planning Mrs Palmer's retirement as the school's long-standing headteacher. Since September 2016, you have worked closely together in a co-headship arrangement, each taking responsibility for half the week, with a shared 'handover day' on Wednesdays. This is working well and is ensuring that the change of leadership, after 17 successful years, is smooth and gentle.

Parents are very supportive of the school and almost universally positive about it. A high number of parents responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and many people chose to leave additional written comments. Parents described the staff as 'approachable and caring' and said that their children are 'happy and eager to learn'. Many parents described the school as 'excellent' and several said how much they appreciate the range of information they receive. For example, one

parent commented that, 'the communication is second to none'. One parent summed up the views of many by saying: 'My daughter loves it here. She goes to school with a smile on her face every day and when I pick her up she is always beaming.'

You have focused well on the points for improvement from the previous inspection, and have made good progress in these areas. The school continues to improve and its overall effectiveness is still clearly good. You know that there is work to do to bring outcomes in other subjects up to the same high standards as in English and mathematics, and to ensure that more disadvantaged pupils make rapid progress.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. The school has a number of senior staff who have been properly trained to carry out the role of designated safeguarding lead effectively. This means that there is good coverage throughout the week and there is always someone available should a child protection concern arise. Relationships between staff and pupils are very strong. This helps to keep children safe because pupils are more likely to share concerns with an adult they trust, should they arise.

You have recently improved the way records of child protection concerns are kept. Although detailed records have always been kept, they are now better organised and have clear chronologies. This means that you are better able to see emerging patterns in the concerns that staff report about pupils. The school's single central record of pre-employment checks meets statutory requirements.

Inspection findings

- I followed a number of lines of enquiry in order to check that the school remains good. Initially, I had intended to look at outcomes in writing because the published data for 2016 showed a dip in this subject. However, you supplied me with a summary of your evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses prior to the inspection. This showed that you had focused strongly on improving writing during the previous academic year, and that outcomes at the end of key stage 1 were, once again, above the national average in 2017. We agreed that it would be sensible to look at outcomes for pupils across the broader curriculum instead.
- As leaders, you had already identified the need to improve outcomes for pupils in subjects other than English and mathematics, and to be able to track and monitor the progress pupils make in these subjects. I agree that this is a suitable area for you to prioritise. Pupils experience an appropriately broad and balanced curriculum. Their topic books and folders, and science books in Year 2, show evidence of pupils' work in these subjects.
- However, the quality and range of work in other subjects are not as strong as they are in English and mathematics. Pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to make substantial and sustained progress in subjects such as history and music. Assessment is not well developed in these subjects. You are working with

colleagues in other local schools to develop an effective and practical approach to assessment that will enable you to track pupils' progress accurately across the full range of subjects in the national curriculum.

- The second area that I looked at was outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. The published assessment information available prior to the inspection showed a mixed picture in terms of how good outcomes are for the small number of disadvantaged pupils who attend the school.
- Leaders and governors have high aspirations for all pupils but for disadvantaged pupils particularly. You have adjusted the way that the pupil premium grant is spent in order for it to have greater direct impact on the progress that disadvantaged pupils make. For example, additional qualified teachers work with pupils on an individual basis, or in small groups, to tackle their misconceptions and any weaker areas of learning.
- Disadvantaged pupils are making at least expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics throughout the school. You and the school's governors monitor spending of the pupil premium grant regularly. However, you do not check explicitly enough whether the way the funding is spent is having a clear impact on the progress that pupils make. As a result, few disadvantaged pupils make the rapid progress necessary to enable gaps between their attainment and that of other pupils to diminish quickly.
- The third area that I checked was whether pupils' gender has an impact on the progress they make. The 2016 published data suggested the possibility that girls do better in English while boys do better in mathematics. Assessment information for current pupils, the work in pupils' books and other inspection evidence shows clearly that this is not the case. Staff use a wide range of appropriate methods to ensure that all pupils enjoy their learning and have their needs met.
- The fourth line of enquiry was to check whether pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress throughout the school. I chose to look at this area because the very small number of pupils in this group meant that little information was available prior to the inspection.
- There are very few pupils on the school's list of those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Currently, 18 pupils have been identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities out of a school roll of 360. The school's assessment information shows clearly that this group of pupils is making good progress. You place a strong emphasis on ensuring that all teaching is of at least a good quality and that pupils are given the support they need to succeed. For example, the 'treehouse' class opened in September 2017 and is providing specialist support for eight pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Although it is too early to measure the impact of the provision fully, there are clear early signs that pupils are gaining from this approach.

- Finally, I looked at how leaders ensure that pupils attend school regularly and whether any groups are disadvantaged by low attendance. This was chosen because published data showed that disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities attend less well than others.
- You have ensured that very good processes are in place both to monitor pupils' attendance and to take action to improve it when necessary. As a result, overall attendance and the attendance of all groups of pupils are now similar to the national averages.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- the pupil premium grant is used to maximum effect in order that more disadvantaged pupils make rapid progress so that they catch up with their classmates
- pupils make substantial and sustained progress in subjects other than English and mathematics.

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

Yours sincerely

Wendy Varney
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, other senior leaders and a group of governors. I observed teaching and learning, jointly with you, and spoke with pupils in their classrooms. I took into account the 116 responses to Parent View, and 57 free-text comments from parents. I scrutinised a range of school documents and looked at pupils' exercise books.