

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mrs Sarah Cope
Headteacher
Whitchurch CofE Infant and Nursery School
Station Road
Whitchurch
Shropshire
SY13 1RJ

Dear Mrs Cope

Short inspection of Whitchurch CofE Infant and Nursery School

Following my visit to the school on Wednesday 1 November 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 June 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since your appointment as headteacher in September 2016, you have brought about rapid improvements in provision and outcomes for current pupils. Under your strong leadership, there is an ambitious vision, along with team spirit and a committed drive for continual improvement. Staff are proud to work at Whitchurch CofE Infant School. This was summed up by one member of staff, who said: 'Our headteacher is an inspirational leader who has the vision and drive to make this school a special place for our children to learn and grow.' Staff and governors model the values that are at the heart of the school. You and other leaders have successfully created a safe, caring environment where pupils settle quickly to work and engage eagerly with the tasks set for them. It was clear throughout the inspection that your mantra 'learning as we grow, growing as we learn' is the driving principle behind your continued drive for improvement.

Parents who spoke to me and who completed the online questionnaire hold the school in high regard. They appreciate the strong 'family-orientated' atmosphere that you and your team have created. This is fundamental to the Christian ethos and values that underpin the work of the school. Many parents commented on how well the school supports their child's learning and meets their pastoral needs. Comments from parents included: 'My child really enjoys coming to school because they really enjoy learning.'

Pupils are eager to do well and work diligently. During the inspection, numerous

pupils provided support and encouragement to one other and helped their peers improve work or collaborated on a task. Pupils showed compassion and empathy towards each other as they interacted throughout the school day. For example, during breaktimes they made sure that everyone was included in their games so that 'no one is left out'.

You have experienced significant staffing difficulties during the last academic year. Despite this, you and the governors have taken strategic decisions that have made sure that many of the areas for improvement from the last inspection have been addressed. Following the last inspection, leaders were asked to ensure that pupils had opportunities to write more frequently, and that teachers used feedback more effectively to enable pupils to improve their work. Currently, pupils have more opportunities to write at length and to edit and improve their writing.

You intervened quickly to redress a decline in standards at the end of key stage 1. As a result, current pupils' outcomes have improved dramatically in reading, writing and mathematics. The evidence from this inspection confirms that these improvements are being sustained. You have continued to strive for improvements in the teaching of mathematics by providing effective training for staff and individualised support for teachers. Consequently, outcomes in mathematics have improved. However, some aspects of arithmetic, reasoning, logic and problem-solving are less well developed. Lesson observations, work in pupils' books and discussions with pupils about their work show that most pupils are suitably challenged when learning. However, the most able pupils are not always sufficiently challenged to achieve higher standards. As a result, they do not always make the progress they should, especially in writing and mathematics.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding procedures are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of a high quality. There is a strong culture of safeguarding that ensures that pupils flourish and learn in a safe and secure environment. Pupils' welfare is at the forefront of all the school does. For example, you took rapid action to make sure that the school site was secure. Many parents commented on how swiftly you acted in the interests of pupils' safety and welfare. You and other leaders provide regular training for all staff that is appropriate for the needs of the school and its context. Adults spoken to during the inspection were clear about what they should do if they have any concerns about pupils' welfare. Your governors and staff have a good understanding of the specific safeguarding concerns that relate to the context of the school. They are alert to issues including the risks of children moving schools who may go missing from education. Designated safeguarding leaders liaise effectively with external agencies in the best interests of pupils.

Inspection findings

- You have improved teaching and learning in writing. You have made sure that teachers use a consistent approach to developing pupils' writing skills. You have provided effective training for staff to improve their subject knowledge and have

raised their expectations of what pupils should achieve. As a result, pupils are making better progress across all year groups. In addition, assessment information is used precisely to pinpoint pupils' next steps so that any gaps in their skills, knowledge and understanding in writing are closed quickly. Effective interventions help pupils who speak English as an additional language to improve their understanding of spoken and written English so that they can learn in all subjects. As a result, most pupils make rapid progress in reading and writing.

- Pupils who are supported by pupil premium funding are making good progress. This is because leaders have used assessment information effectively to identify their needs and have implemented precise interventions as a result. You have made sure that staff have the skills to be able to provide effective support. For example, you identified that this group of pupils needed specific support to develop their skills in phonics and early reading so that they could learn effectively in all subjects. You commissioned training for staff in the teaching of phonics. During the inspection, staff provided very effective support to enable pupils to rapidly develop their reading skills. You have also helped disadvantaged pupils to take part in enrichment activities. For example, pupils worked with an artist using printing techniques and natural materials to construct a work of art that was displayed in Chester Cathedral.
- You have established effective systems to monitor attendance. You intervene quickly when attendance slips for individual pupils. Well-developed pastoral strategies provide support and challenge to parents to help improve their children's attendance. You liaise well with outside agencies to promote good attendance and punctuality. For example, you reward good attendance through the school's weekly 'Be here bear' campaign. As a result of your initiatives, attendance is improving rapidly.
- You have developed a culture that promotes and fosters a love of reading among pupils. The teaching of reading is improving across the school and, as a result, pupils' progress and outcomes are improving. The majority are making good or better progress. Many children start school with skills, knowledge and understanding below those that are typical for their age in reading. They make rapid progress in the Nursery and Reception classes because staff use effective strategies for teaching phonics and early reading skills. Pupils who read to me during the inspection read fluently and at pace. They understood what they were reading and referred to the text to explain their responses. Those pupils who have specific barriers to learning or who need to catch up on the standards expected for their age receive appropriate and effective interventions and support to help them to make good progress.
- You identified that some of the most able pupils were not making the progress that you expect of them in reading. To bring about improvement, you provided effective training for staff. Staff then implemented specific interventions to improve pupils' comprehension skills. As a result, a growing number of pupils are reaching the higher standards.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and make sure that pupils are appropriately challenged, so that more reach higher standards, especially in writing and maths
- teachers further develop and deepen pupil's understanding of numbers and calculation
- teachers further develop pupils' skills in reasoning, logic and problem-solving in mathematics.

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

Yours sincerely

John Demmerling
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and other members of the leadership team. I also met with a group of governors and a representative from the school that provides you with support. I met with a representative from the local authority. You joined me on visits to classes. We looked at examples of pupils' work.

I talked to pupils about their work during visits to their classes and informally spoke to pupils around school at different times of the day. I reviewed a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation of its performance, the school development plan and documents relating to keeping pupils safe. We discussed the most recent information about pupils' achievement. I took account of 17 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I spoke with parents at the end of the school day. I reviewed responses to the staff questionnaire. I also looked at information published on the school's website.