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Mr Peter Hudson
Headteacher
Chesham Primary School
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Dear Mr Hudson

Short inspection of Chesham Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 16 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 April 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Staff and governors share your high aspirations. You and your staff have created an inclusive and harmonious community. You have designed a vibrant and interesting curriculum, enabling pupils to develop resilience and creativity. Pupils from a wide range of backgrounds thrive academically and socially. I found pupils to be polite, confident and articulate. They spoke to me enthusiastically about the many sporting, extra-curricular and leadership opportunities available to them. All the parents whom I spoke with were very positive about the school. As one parent commented: 'It's a wonderful school and my child is very well supported.'

You are keen for the school to be outward facing. You lead a cluster of local schools. This partnership arrangement enables staff to share innovative practice. Staff appreciate the training that they receive. You meet regularly with leaders and class teachers to review pupils' progress. This enables you to identify those pupils who are underachieving and to plan additional support to help them catch up.

Governors want the best for pupils. A governor commented: 'We want the pupils to develop a love for learning and to feel part of a happy, family community.' Governors ask probing questions and provide leaders with a good balance of support and challenge. Governors keep their own knowledge up to date through attending training sessions organised for them. The recent 'health checks' conducted by the local authority have supported school improvement effectively

because you have used these reports to help you to prioritise areas to improve.

You have addressed the issues raised in the last inspection report with considerable success. You have made sure that development planning is incisive and focused on the most important priorities. We looked at pupils' books together and with the deputy headteacher. I spoke with pupils about their work. We found that teachers have high expectations and plan interesting work that is well matched to pupils' levels of ability. However, you acknowledge that more pupils need to reach greater depth in English and mathematics.

You have improved pupils' outcomes across the school. The proportion of children who achieve a good level of development in the Reception Year has been steadily improving and was in line with the national average in 2017. In 2017, the proportion of pupils who passed the Year 1 phonics screening check was above average. In 2016, at the end of key stage 2, all pupils reached at least the expected standard in writing and progress in writing and mathematics was significantly above the national average. The unvalidated overall progress scores for reading and mathematics at the end of key stage 2 were high in 2017.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding procedures are fit for purpose. Records are maintained carefully and accurately. Checks on the suitability of staff to work with pupils are thorough. Careful records are kept of recruitment. Staff and leaders have adequate training in keeping pupils safe. Staff are vigilant and know what to do if they have concerns for a pupil's safety and welfare. Safeguarding referrals are made in a timely manner and any concerns are followed up tenaciously. Leaders work constructively with parents and external agencies. The overwhelming majority of parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, feel that their children are safe, well behaved and well cared for. Pupils say that they feel safe and that bullying is rare.

Inspection findings

- The inspection focused on a number of key lines of enquiry, the first of which related to attendance. Pupils enjoy coming to school and this is shown by their above average attendance. However, attendance for disadvantaged pupils was lower than that of other pupils in 2016. Staff rigorously follow up pupil absences with parents and carers. You have introduced a range of rewards to encourage pupils to come to school. The impact of these initiatives is that the attendance of disadvantaged pupils has increased. However, you recognise that the attendance of these pupils needs to improve further.
- The second focus for the inspection related to the progress of pupils in reading, writing and mathematics in key stage 1. You correctly identified that results at the end of Year 2 in 2016 were below the national averages. You improved teaching to address this. For example, teachers provide more regular opportunities for pupils to solve problems and use reasoning in mathematics.

There is a strong focus from teachers on ensuring that pupils are accurate in their spelling and grammar. Pupils have many opportunities to develop their reading comprehension skills. The effectiveness of your actions can be seen in the good progress made by current pupils and in the improved achievement in reading, in writing and in mathematics in the provisional Year 2 results for 2017. However, you recognise that pupils need to be challenged more so that they can achieve greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics.

- I also focused on the attainment of disadvantaged pupils in key stage 1 in English and mathematics. You and your staff know these pupils well and have a clear understanding of the barriers to learning that they face. You now use the pupil premium funding more effectively to enable disadvantaged pupils to receive additional support for their learning. Evidence from books and from the school's own assessment information shows that current pupils are now catching up. Disadvantaged pupils' achievement at the end of Year 2 in 2017 improved in reading, writing and mathematics compared with 2016. However, you recognise that the difference in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and others nationally needs to diminish further.
- You recognised that the proportion of disadvantaged pupils who passed the Year 1 phonics check in 2017, while an improvement on 2016, was below the national average. In response to this, you have organised the pupils into smaller groups for phonics so that teaching is more precisely matched to their needs. Teachers use their subject knowledge to help pupils to read and to pronounce sounds correctly. The school's current assessment information shows that pupils are making faster progress in developing their skills than they have done in the past.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the attendance of disadvantaged pupils improves further
- pupils in all year groups are suitably challenged to enable a higher proportion of them to achieve greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics
- they continue to reduce the difference in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally.

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

Yours sincerely

Ahmed Marikar
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection I met with you, the deputy headteacher and a group of middle leaders. I also met with four governors and a representative of the local authority. I met with eight pupils from key stage 2 and spoke informally with others during breaktimes. I visited a number of classes where I observed teaching and learning, looked at pupils' work and spoke with pupils. I also heard pupils from Year 2 and Year 6 read. I carried out a scrutiny of pupils' work across the school. I spoke with parents as they brought their children to school.

I took account of 47 responses to Parent View, the Ofsted online questionnaire, including 45 free-text responses. I also considered the responses of four staff and 27 pupils to Ofsted's online questionnaires. I looked at a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and information about pupils' attainment and progress. I also evaluated safeguarding procedures, including: policies to keep children safe, records of training, safeguarding checks and attendance information. I undertook a review of the school's website.