

22 May 2018

Mrs Robinson
Headteacher
St Christopher Primary School
Allesley Old Road
Coventry
West Midlands
CV5 9JG

Dear Mrs Robinson

Short inspection of St Christopher Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 22 May 2018, 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 October 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

You are a strong and effective leader who is focused on continual school improvement. Standards of attainment in reading, writing and mathematics are above average in both key stages 1 and 2. Teaching is consistent and effective. Pupils work hard and respect their teachers.

You, the leadership team and the governors have shown a steely determination to provide the best for all pupils. You know your school well and, from the outset of this inspection, you demonstrated an honest and accurate evaluation of the school's strengths and areas in need of further work. Leaders provide good-quality guidance, support and training for staff. They regularly check the difference their work is making to teaching and pupils' achievement.

The governing body is a powerful ally in your work. Governors know how different groups of pupils are faring because they have a good grasp of performance information. They visit the school frequently and spend time reflecting on the views of staff and pupils. They ensure that financial resources are targeted to where they are needed most. Governors are proud of, and ambitious for, the school.

All the parents I spoke to on the playground and the majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, were positive about the school. One parent said that the school was 'fantastic', and another parent told me her child loved learning since coming to the school.

Throughout the school, there is an atmosphere of calm, purposeful endeavour. Pupils are extremely polite and well-mannered. The 'consistently good and at times outstanding' standard of behaviour that was noted in the previous inspection report has been maintained. Pupils are articulate and able to express their views and opinions clearly, but also listen well and respect other people's ideas. Their attitudes to learning are highly positive, as can be seen in their diligence in class and the high quality of presentation of work in their books and on displays.

Since the previous inspection, the leadership team has been strengthened and teaching has continued to improve. Highly focused monitoring, individual and whole-school next steps have allowed teachers to develop their practice at a sustained rate. Both formal and informal support and guidance ensure that staff feel supported and challenged. There is a clear climate of accountability, but also regard for staff well-being. In their responses to the Ofsted staff questionnaire, several staff commented on how school leadership supported them to improve their practice and reduce unnecessary workload.

Your evaluation of teaching is accurate because you check what you see in classes alongside pupils' books. This gives you a sense of the teaching that pupils experience each day. Effective practice in classrooms is celebrated and shared. Teachers benefit from a range of training opportunities to refresh and refine their teaching skills.

There is clear evidence in pupils' books of challenge and progress in lessons. This is particularly true in pupils' written work, where pupils write effectively in a number of different styles, including stories and recounts. In the mathematics lessons I saw, teachers ensured that pupils are asked to apply their skills to solve a range of problems, justify their reasoning and reflect on the appropriateness of their answers.

In your previous inspection, you were asked to improve teaching to accelerate pupils' progress in mathematics at key stage 1 and writing in Years 4 and 5. It is evident that, over time, attainment in mathematics at key stage 1 has been at least in line with national levels. In writing, as a result of effective teaching, careful tracking and opportunities to write extended pieces of work, an increasing proportion of pupils are working at age-related expectations. Continuing to boost progress in writing is a current priority.

Inspectors also asked you to develop further the roles of subject leaders by giving them more opportunities to check on teaching and learning and monitor school improvements. Middle leaders now play an integral role in school improvement, auditing current practice, providing meaningful feedback and assessing the impact of teaching on standards. They have opportunities to shadow senior leaders and work with external providers to conduct reviews of school provision, for example the impact of pupil premium funding on pupils' outcomes. You know what improvements are needed in order to secure improved outcomes, particularly for boys at the end of Reception and in writing across key stage 2.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose; records are detailed and of a high quality. Leaders have successfully established a strong culture of safeguarding throughout the school. As a result, all staff feel a sense of responsibility for pupils' well-being. Staff have a good understanding of what to do if they have a concern about a pupil. Procedures are in place to ensure that any such concerns are followed up promptly and carefully.

The deputy headteacher and family support officer keep well-ordered records relating to their work to safeguard and protect pupils. They are knowledgeable and have developed positive relationships with parents, built on mutual trust and respect. Effective links with external agencies are in place, and these help to ensure that the most vulnerable pupils and their families get the help that they need.

Staff and governors take part in regular training so that they have up-to-date knowledge of the latest good practice in safeguarding.

Pupils say that they feel safe in school and trust their teachers to look after them. They have a good understanding of what constitutes bullying and are confident that bullying is extremely rare in their school. You have made sure there are opportunities for pupils to talk about their feelings and to ask questions, for example through the 'talk box' in classrooms. Pupils also understand how to keep themselves safe in different situations, such as when using the internet.

Inspection findings

- The inspection focused on a number of key lines of enquiry. The first of these related to looking at outcomes in the early years. Although identified groups of children made accelerated progress last year, you and your leaders are aware that the proportion of children achieving a good level of development needed to be higher. As a result of effective teaching, staff training and revised planning, the indications are that the proportion will be in line with national levels this year. Nevertheless, ensuring that a greater proportion of children, in particular boys, enter Year 1 prepared for the demands of the key stage 1 curriculum remains a school priority.
- I also looked at the teaching of phonics. In response to a dip in phonic scores in 2016, the school made a series of amendments to phonics provision. These included: modelling of effective teaching, updating of resources, one-to-one support and providing guidance for parents. Phonics teaching observed in this inspection was effective. Children were asked to recap previous letter sounds and learn new sounds, and apply these to new situations. The majority of pupils were able to use their phonic knowledge to tackle new work.
- Over time, pupils' progress in writing by the end of Year 6 has lagged behind their progress in reading and mathematics. This was again the case in 2017, where progress in reading and mathematics was broadly at or above the national average, but progress in writing was behind other schools nationally. School leaders are aware of this and regularly analyse the attainment and progress of

different groups, such as boys, girls and pupils who speak English as an additional language. They use this information to target resources to best effect and routinely monitor the impact of this. For example, school records and pupils' work show that differences between the progress rates for different groups are diminishing. In upper key stage 2, for instance, an increasing proportion of pupils are now writing at or above the standard expected for their age.

- The school provides pupils with a broad and well-balanced curriculum. Educational visits to places such as museums and sites of historical interest enhance pupils' learning and bring topics to life. The curriculum is based around themes that provide pupils with the chance for in-depth study and opportunities to develop skills in a range of contexts. I spoke to some proud Year 4 pupils who had recently combined their design technology and art skills, as well as a working knowledge of circuits, to make lighthouses for their topic work.
- The school has a strong sporting tradition and an impressive collection of trophies won in local and national competitions. However, participation is not limited to those most able at sport. All pupils are encouraged to take part in sporting activities through after-school clubs and during breaktimes, where a wide range of sport and games equipment is available. The varied programme of extra-curricular activities also includes many other activities, such as cookery, chess and gardening.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- maintain a sharp focus on pupils' progress in writing across key stage 2, so that it is in line with the rates seen in reading and mathematics
- focus on increasing the proportion of pupils, particularly boys, achieving a good level of development at the end of the Reception year.

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

Yours sincerely

Nadeem Bhatti
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, senior leaders, staff and governors. I carried out short observations of teaching and looked at pupils' work in books and on display. I talked with pupils in lessons and met with a group of pupils to gather their views. I spoke with parents at the beginning of the school day.

By the end of the inspection, there were 91 recent responses on Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. I took account of these responses as well as the conversations with parents I had on the morning of the inspection.

I looked at several documents, including pupils' progress information, the school's own evaluation of its performance, development plans, external monitoring reports and a range of school records. I observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school. I also checked the school's website and the procedures for keeping pupils safe. I asked members of staff, pupils and parents about safeguarding matters.