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Mr Peter Talbot
Headteacher
Castle Hill Community Primary School
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Dear Mr Talbot

Short inspection of Castle Hill Community Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 5 June 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 March 2014.

This school continues to be good.

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

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in specific areas. This may indicate that the school has improved significantly overall. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

Pupils achieve exceptionally well at Castle Hill. Since the previous inspection, pupils' attainment and progress have strengthened significantly. The vast majority of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, make very strong progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of key stage 2. Consequently, many pupils achieve standards above those expected for their age in these areas. Outcomes for disadvantaged pupils have improved significantly and gaps between them and other pupils nationally are closing rapidly.

You are highly ambitious for pupils to achieve well. You have created a happy, caring community. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school and hold you in very high regard. One parent commented, 'From receptionists, to caretakers, to the headteacher, everyone is friendly and helpful.' You have firmly established a strong focus on learning. Many pupils told me that they really enjoy their lessons. Another parent explained, 'My child comes home happy and is excited to tell me about what she has learned that day.'

Pupils are exceptionally friendly and courteous. They work hard, talk enthusiastically about their learning and listen carefully to each other's ideas. Pupils move about the school in a calm and polite manner. They take great pride in their work, which is of a consistently high quality because pupils understand exactly what is expected of them.

You and governors know the school well and accurately identify its main strengths and areas for further development. Your clear leadership and careful monitoring have ensured that leaders have taken the right actions to tackle the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. These were to raise pupils' achievement by improving the quality of teaching and to ensure that the most able pupils achieve well, with a particular focus on writing for both. Effective training and support enable teachers to skilfully question pupils and challenge the most able to achieve high standards. Across the curriculum, pupils are now given many opportunities to write at length using a variety of styles and techniques. For example, pupils in Year 6 produced a range of high-quality writing linked to a topic on the First World War. They wrote letters from the Front, diary entries and war poems, demonstrating their advanced skills effectively. Writing seen in the books of current pupils shows that the most able are making strong progress from their starting points. You are keen to ensure that a larger proportion of the most able disadvantaged pupils achieve well in writing.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding requirements are fit for purpose. Senior leaders rightly ensure that all staff are vigilant in their responsibility to keep pupils safe. Regular staff training and frequent updates ensure that safeguarding remains at the forefront of everyone's mind. Staff recognise the importance of sharing information in a timely manner. One teacher commented, 'It's important to report any worries, as you could supply a tiny part of a bigger puzzle.'

Staff are highly proactive and work effectively with outside agencies. Referrals for outside help are made as soon as required. Staff work closely with parents and provide useful information, helping them to keep their children safe, for example through parent workshops about internet safety. The vast majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey said their children were happy, safe and well looked after.

Governors all have up-to-date safeguarding training. They put their knowledge to good effect by regularly visiting the school to check the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements. Safeguarding is a top priority and frequently discussed at governors' meetings. As a result, pupils thrive in a safe and secure environment.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection we looked closely at specific aspects of the school's provision, including the effectiveness of leaders' work to ensure that disadvantaged pupils achieve well; the effectiveness of provision in early years

and key stage 1 to enable pupils to make good progress from their starting points; and the success of actions taken to ensure that all pupils attend school regularly.

- Disadvantaged pupils achieve positive outcomes by the end of key stage 2. The progress of disadvantaged pupils is very closely monitored by the skilled team of middle leaders. They ensure that carefully tailored support is precisely matched to pupils' needs. As a result, by the time disadvantaged pupils reach the end of key stage 2, many have made strong and often very rapid progress from their starting points. Work in their books shows that attainment is rising and is similar to other pupils nationally with the same starting points. You are ambitious for disadvantaged pupils to achieve even better outcomes across the school.
- The rate of pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics in early years and key stage 1 is increasing rapidly. Pupils' outcomes at the end of key stage 1 are also rising significantly. As soon as they enter early years, children begin to successfully develop their reading, writing and mathematical skills. Strong subject knowledge and skilful questioning enable teachers to address any gaps in pupils' knowledge effectively. Pupils see themselves as successful learners. For example, in Year 2, pupils confidently explained how their improved spellings and phonics knowledge have made them better writers. In pupils' books, there is evidence of very strong progress from starting points that are often lower than is typical. This is as a result of improved teaching in key stage 1.
- Leaders' rigorous monitoring and proactive liaison with families have secured a significant improvement in the school's overall attendance. Pupils talked enthusiastically about the various ways that good attendance is celebrated. Nevertheless, despite impressive improvement, attendance figures remain stubbornly just below that seen nationally. You know that even more needs to be done to achieve the necessary improvement in attendance, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and those who speak English as an additional language.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- an increased proportion of the most able disadvantaged pupils achieve greater depth in writing by the end of key stage 2
- rates of attendance for disadvantaged pupils and those who speak English as an additional language continue to rise rapidly.

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

Yours sincerely

Claire Prince
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and senior leaders and spoke to governors. I also met with a representative from the local authority. Together, you and I visited classes in most year groups. I considered 213 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 18 free-text comments. There were no responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire; however, I considered the results from the staff survey completed by the school in February 2018. I met with a small group of pupils, talked informally to pupils about their learning and scrutinised work in pupils' books. I also analysed a range of the school's documentation, including information about safeguarding. We discussed your evaluation of the school's effectiveness.