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Mrs Katharine Bowen
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Bowen

Short inspection of Crookham Church of England Aided Infant School

Following my visit to the school on 26 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 February 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since joining the school in 2015, you have created a happy and nurturing school. You provide thoughtful and inspirational leadership, which is well respected by all at Crookham Infants. Aply supported by your deputy headteacher, you are committed to providing an 'irresistible learning' experience for your pupils. You work successfully to ensure that the school's Christian values, 'Love God, love others, love learning', are shared by all.

Your deep commitment to developing pupils fully, so they are able to make a positive contribution to their community, is shared by your whole staff team. Staff morale is high. Consequently, there is a strong team spirit, 'Team Crookham', within the whole school community. Parents are overwhelmingly enthusiastic about the school. Every parent who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, to which there were 104 responses, would recommend the school. One parent wrote, 'There is such an air of happiness around the school.' Another parent commented, 'I couldn't have hoped for a better start to my children's education than they have received at Crookham Infants.'

Pupils love their school. They say their teachers are 'jolly, kind and encouraging', and that they have kind friends. Pupils behave well in lessons and work well together. They are polite and eager to learn.

The previous inspection report noted many strengths of the school including determined leadership, effective teaching and high attainment. These are still strengths of the school. In Year 2 in 2017, the proportion of pupils who attained the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics was above the national average. In addition, the proportion of pupils who reached the higher standards in reading and writing exceeded the national picture. Leaders are not complacent, however, and know that currently not enough pupils are attaining the higher standards in writing and mathematics.

The teaching of phonics is another strength of the school. Earlier this year, you received a ministerial letter congratulating the school on being in the top 8% of primary schools in England for pupils' achievement in the Year 1 phonics screening check.

At the time of the previous inspection, leaders were asked to improve how hard pupils had to think in lessons. You have successfully increased the level of challenge faced by pupils in English and mathematics. You acknowledge, however, that the teaching of history and geography could challenge pupils further.

Your evaluation of the school's current performance is accurate and reflective. Leaders use assessment information well to precisely pinpoint areas for future school improvement. For example, you recognise that the teaching of handwriting is inconsistent and have plans to improve this.

Governors know the school well. They have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, due to the high-quality information you provide to them. They validate this by their frequent visits to school. Governors effectively hold you and your staff to account.

Safeguarding is effective.

School leaders have ensured that the school's safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Records are detailed and any necessary actions are completed without delay. There are strong links with a range of external services and the local authority so that vulnerable children and their families get the support they need. Safeguarding training is regular. Staff understand their roles and responsibilities well. During the inspection, I identified a discrepancy in the single central record. This oversight was addressed immediately, demonstrating leaders' and administrators' commitment to meeting statutory safeguarding requirements.

Staff and parents who responded to Ofsted's questionnaire unanimously agreed that pupils are kept safe at the school. As one parent commented, which summed up the views of many, 'My daughter is treated as a unique individual in every aspect throughout the school day. I do believe she is cared for as much at school as she is at home.' Pupils also feel safe at school. They are confident that if they had any concerns adults would listen to them.

Inspection findings

- At the beginning of the inspection, we agreed that the focus would be on: how effectively leaders have ensured that the work set for pupils is at the right level of challenge; the improvements to the teaching of writing; and teaching in the early years.
- Leaders have introduced a set of characters to teach the children about learning values such as resourcefulness and reflectiveness. As a result, pupils relish being challenged. They told me that 'being stuck is ok', knowing this is real learning. They said they have to think hard in their lessons. Teachers plan for pupils' needs and monitor pupils' progress information very effectively. As a result, pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, make good progress in English, mathematics and science. Recent improvements to the teaching of mathematics, including more opportunities for pupils to use their reasoning skills, have increased the level of challenge and deep understanding in some lessons. However, this is not yet consistent in all classes and, as a result, not enough pupils are working at the higher standards in mathematics. We looked together at a range of pupils' work and visited lessons. We identified that pupils' subject-specific skills in history and geography are less well taught. Consequently, pupils are less challenged and make less progress in these subjects.
- Recently introduced teaching strategies are having a positive impact on the progress that pupils are now making in writing. Pupils know how to be successful in their writing lessons because they use the provided 'top tips' effectively. There are many opportunities for pupils to write at length and across the curriculum to a good standard. Dedicated time to practise spelling skills and patterns, including effective support from home, is strengthening pupils' writing further. Pupils use their knowledge of phonics well when they spell. Our visits to lessons and scrutiny of pupils' work showed, however, that the quality of handwriting is inconsistent across the school. We also agreed that not enough pupils are currently reaching the higher standards in writing across the school.
- Children get off to a great start in the early years. Relationships are strong. They enter the school with skills that are mainly in line with those typically found in children of the same age. Leaders ensure that there is a sharp focus on developing children's early language skills, and, as a result, children make good progress. Adults provide a wide selection of engaging and exciting activities, which develop and deepen children's knowledge and understanding. For example, during the inspection, children were making traps to catch the mystery thief who had stolen the superheroes and fairies from the classroom. They were skillfully encouraged to think and try out their own ideas. They made their choices confidently.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the curriculum is further developed so that all pupils, particularly the most able, are challenged to improve their subject-specific skills in history and geography

- more pupils meet the higher standards in mathematics and writing
- pupils' handwriting is more systematically developed throughout the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Lea Hannam
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and your deputy to discuss the school's effectiveness. We visited lessons to observe pupils' learning, talk to pupils and look at their work. Together, we looked at the quality of pupils' work in their books. I considered 104 responses from parents to the Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 74 free-text comments. I spoke to parents at the beginning of the school day. Responses to the staff questionnaire were also considered. I also had a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority. There were no responses to the pupil questionnaire.

I met with the acting chair of the governing body and two additional governors. I had a formal meeting with a group of pupils to discuss their views about the school. I evaluated the school's safeguarding arrangements. A wide range of documents was examined, including: the school's self-evaluation; school improvement planning; information about pupils' progress; the school's website; and various policies.