

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



16 July 2018

Mr Chris Axten-Higgs
Headteacher
Catcott Primary School
Manor Road
Catcott
Bridgwater
Somerset
TA7 9HD

Dear Mr Axten-Higgs

Short inspection of Catcott Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 3 July 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.

The school has been transformed since the previous inspection. You have developed a strong leadership team that is helping you monitor and continue to improve the quality of education provided by the school. Staff morale is high because they are treated with respect and are provided with high-quality training. The governing body helps to make sure that pupils' lives at Catcott continue to flourish.

The school remains a central hub of village life, while preparing pupils for futures in the wider world. This is underpinned by the strong curriculum which interlinks subjects through set themes. In every year group, there are three topics covered for one term each. Each topic has a main focus for history, geography or science. Activities are not forced to fit the theme – they are purposeful. For example, in relation to the Second World War, pupils design 'make do and mend slippers', build an Anderson shelter and conduct family research. Trips and activities are integral to the themes. You ensure that the costs for trips are kept to a minimum and that funds are available to support families if needed.

You have systematically improved the outdoor areas. Pupils learn and play in safe, attractive spaces. A key feature is the 'forest' area, where all pupils have at least one lesson per week. You have planned that the next phase for refurbishment is the outdoor area next to the early years classroom. Although staff ensure that it

provides stimulating and interesting activities, it is not now as attractive as other areas of the school.

You have met the requirements of the previous inspection by improving the quality of teaching and developing the senior leadership team.

Safeguarding is effective.

All staff and those responsible for governance ensure that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You and the staff work closely with other agencies to secure the safety and well-being of pupils. There is a strong culture of safeguarding. Staff know what to do and where to go if they have any concerns. Staff receive regular, appropriate training. Risk assessments are regularly reviewed and monitored, including by the governing body.

Pupils told me that they really appreciate the efforts staff make to keep them safe. They like the new fence around the school as it stops stray animals wandering into the playground. They also told me how kind pupils are to each other and that it is easy to make friends at Catcott. They told me that it is all right to be different at this school as people do not get picked on for being different.

Inspection findings

- For the first line of enquiry, we agreed to look at the level of challenge provided for the most able pupils. Teachers' expectations for what all pupils can and should achieve have risen. Teachers skilfully question pupils about their learning to check their understanding. They expect high-quality answers from pupils to show that they have carefully considered the questions posed. As a result, pupils' work continues to improve throughout the curriculum. You have ensured that there are more opportunities for pupils to conduct their own extensive investigations. Where possible, these are linked with external competitions, for example the Exeter mathematics poster challenge. Pupils told me they enjoy these challenges as it makes them really think hard. Pupils talk about their learning with enthusiasm. They find that the themed work flows smoothly from lesson to lesson.
- In pupils' art books we saw how pupils were learning to draw the human face in the right proportion through formal drawing techniques. All pupils are developing strong observational skills, with the most able producing good-quality representations, for example of the human eye.
- The inspection's second line of enquiry was to see how well you were supported by the school's other leaders. The leadership has broadened to include the mathematics and English coordinators. They scrutinise pupils' work, checking that information about pupils' progress is accurate. They also report to link governors, who, in turn, keep the whole governing body informed. They are helping you to ensure that initiatives to improve mathematical reasoning and to further increase reading levels are effectively implemented to raise pupils' achievements.
- As part of the Somerset 'Thinking Leadership' research project, the leadership

team has developed a set of core values around pupils' independence, resilience and thinking skills. These values underpin the curriculum changes that have been made. These changes are providing pupils with rich purposeful learning experiences.

- The third line of enquiry concerned pupils' writing. We looked at how well it is developed in other subjects. We also considered if the writing of boys, and of those with middle prior attainment in key stage 1, was improving. You and the literacy leader have ensured that pupils' writing is improving. The foundations for writing are being secured in the early years, for example through children helping Captain Sam to clear up the rubbish left by the pirates and writing down what they have found. Children can construct sentences and use their phonics knowledge to help them spell correctly. Staff ensure the early development of fine motor skills, which will help pupils in their writing, through a wide range of activities such as using pipettes to put water into small indentations.
- Older pupils are using other subjects and the curriculum themes to extend their writing, for example by using their designs and drawings in art to help shape their narrative for characters they have individually identified as being a hero, villain, love interest or helper in their stories. Pupils were keen to explain the school's 'pride and progress', where pupils regularly choose their best writing to display on the classroom wall. They showed me how having the collection of their work one on top of another helped them see the progress they were making. Because they have to record why they are proud of each piece, it encourages them to think more, as well as enabling a discussion with the class teacher to explain what they might want to improve next.
- Finally, we reviewed the school's success in developing pupils' reading. Over the last three years, the proportion of pupils reaching the higher standard in reading by the end of Year 6 has been higher than the national average. In 2017, the progress that pupils made in reading was well above average. The disadvantaged pupils made more rapid progress in reading and writing during their time in key stage 2. Staff encourage pupils to read higher-level books when they are ready. In lessons, adults use model texts in literacy which are at a greater depth to enrich the vocabulary of all pupils. Classrooms contain high-quality books to support the theme being taught. In addition, the carefully organised library provides pupils with easy access to books that are at the right reading and phonics levels. They are also positioned appropriately for each age group.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to follow the school's improvement plan, in particular to redress the impact of the historically inconsistent teaching of writing
- they improve the outside area next to the early years classroom to match the high quality seen elsewhere in the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Steffi Penny
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this short inspection, I met with you, other leaders, members of the governing body and parents and carers. I spoke with pupils during the day and met members of the school council. I scrutinised the quality of pupils' work. I took account of the 16 responses to the staff survey and 58 responses by parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, along with two letters from parents. There were no responses to the pupil survey.

I considered a wide range of documentary evidence, including records relating to safeguarding, the quality of teaching, the curriculum, assessment information and the school's analysis of its work.