

11 September 2018

Mrs Helen McCarney
Executive Headteacher
Clover Hill VA Infant and Nursery School
Rawley Road
Bowthorpe
Norwich
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NR5 9AP

Dear Mrs McCarney

Short inspection of Clover Hill VA Infant and Nursery School

Following my visit to the school on 11 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 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.

You and the governors have strengthened the leadership team since the last inspection. You have added a key stage 1 leader to the team, enabling you to monitor the quality of teaching and learning more effectively. For example, teachers and teaching assistants speak highly of the coaching support they receive from the key stage 1 leader: 'She works alongside us in phonics and sometimes teaches the group, so we know how to improve our teaching.'

You and the deputy headteacher are never satisfied with pupil outcomes. You are constantly analysing performance information and evaluating what teaching approaches are working and which ones are less effective. For example, in the last school year, you have considerably sharpened your approach to managing and monitoring the teaching of systematic, synthetic phonics. This has resulted in a 10% increase in the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in the Year 1 phonic screening check this year. Your self-evaluation is accurate, although you are a little cautious in your view of teaching. Consequently, your improvement plan is sharply focused on aspects of the school that must be improved.

You and the deputy headteacher closely check the progress of all pupils. You meet every half term with class teachers to make sure pupils are making the progress that they are capable of. Pupils' work we looked at in lessons, for example Year 1 writing, showed very strong progress made from the start of the year. In addition, when the deputy headteacher and I examined the writing produced by pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, progress was as strong as for other pupils. Teachers and teaching assistants have taken on board your forensic approach to analysing pupil outcomes. They are constantly looking for ways to improve their practice and greatly value the high-quality training that you provide, including support from external experts.

Pupils love coming to school. One parent told me that their child really did not like holidays because they prefer to be in school. Pupils enjoy the curriculum the school provides. They talk confidently and with great enthusiasm about all the activities they work on in class. However, they are not so confident, or secure, in explaining what they are learning or about any new knowledge they gain.

Parents and carers have a positive view of the school. One parent wrote: 'My child has come on loads since being at this school. He is always excited about going, which tells me a lot about the school and teachers there.' All the parents I spoke with on the playground are pleased with the progress their children are making and, like those who wrote to me, feel their children are safe and well cared for in school.

Safeguarding is effective.

All safeguarding procedures and policies meet requirements. You and the governors have established a strong and effective pastoral support team. Members of this team are well qualified, including having expertise in health and early help. Consequently, they have the knowledge, skills and understanding to support the most vulnerable children and their families. They manage safeguarding issues with great sensitivity and keep detailed and informative records. They also ensure that staff training is regular and effective. For example, even the newest members of staff are confident to complete safeguarding concern forms.

Pupils feel safe at school because there is no bullying. One pupil said: 'I feel really safe at this school because teachers are always there to look out for you; they are here to protect us.' You take effective steps to ensure that any pupil who finds breaktimes difficult to cope with has suitable provision to meet their particular needs.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry was linked to safeguarding. I wanted to check how you are dealing with low attendance and frequent non-attendance to ensure that all pupils are accounted for and safe. The deputy headteacher has carefully analysed attendance patterns for all year groups. Consequently, she has found that pupils' attendance improves as they go through the school and that by Year 2, it is in

line with national figures. You have strong systems in place to encourage regular attendance. For example, pupils value the class and individual rewards you give out for good attendance. Your pastoral team visit homes where parents need additional support to get their children to school on time, every day. Attendance is improving slowly but steadily due to the strong action you are taking. You have sharply focused plans in place to ensure that attendance continues to improve.

- My second line of enquiry was to check whether governors target pupil premium funding effectively to improve the learning, behaviour and attendance of disadvantaged pupils. Governors keep a very close check on how leaders propose to spend pupil premium funding. They do not agree to buying expensive resources without being sure that these will have a positive impact on pupils' outcomes. Typically, they ask you about educational research to confirm that the programme improves learning or behaviour. They also challenge you to consider whether the programme will work with the pupils that attend your school.
- Governors are rigorous in their challenge, asking for progress reports to check that pupil premium funded programmes are having a positive impact. For example, they have regular meetings with the senior federation teacher who manages the pastoral support team. In addition, they have walked round the school during phonics teaching to see how this is being put into practice.
- My third line of enquiry was to check whether phonics teaching is having an impact on improving outcomes in the Year 1 phonics screening check and how soon pupils start to learn letter sounds. You and senior leaders have reviewed how you teach phonics this school year because you rightly identified that pupils were not making sufficient progress over time. Because of your accurate evaluation, you introduce children to letter sounds as soon as possible and usually in the last term of the Nursery Year. Children respond well to the lively teaching approaches and rapidly learn the first set of initial sounds, with most-able children achieving more than this.
- From Reception onwards, you group children by the stage of their phonics knowledge and understanding. Group work is sharply focused and has an appropriate level of challenge. The deputy headteacher rigorously checks pupils' phonics knowledge with half-termly tests. Reception children and pupils in Years 1 and 2 are moved to new groups according to the outcomes of the tests. However, all staff who teach the groups are vigilant about checking progress. The coaching support they receive from the key stage 1 leader also ensures that those who are making stronger or weaker progress are rapidly identified and moved to different groups or different provision according to their needs.
- Pupil outcomes have improved this year due to the highly robust and rigorous approach to teaching phonics. The deputy headteacher explained: 'We teach the programme precisely as it is required to be taught with no deviations. This works well for our pupils. We also invite the programme provider to monitor our teaching and pupils' learning and give regular training to all staff.' The school's own data indicates that more pupils at the end of key stage 1 will achieve greater depth in reading this year than ever before.
- My fourth line of enquiry was about the curriculum in the early years and if it enables children to develop the skills, knowledge and understanding, particularly

in reading, writing and mathematics, to be ready to learn in Year 1. Most children start the Nursery with skills, knowledge and understanding less advanced than those typical of children aged between 30 and 50 months. Children's work and the detailed records kept indicate that children make strong progress in the Nursery due to the carefully planned provision. For example, each day is carefully structured to get the right balance between children choosing activities to explore and adults directly teaching children the skills they need to be ready for Reception.

- Not all pupils attend the Nursery. However, those who start school in Reception make equally good progress from their starting points as those who started in the Nursery. This is because the early years leader ensures that the effective balance between teacher- and child-led learning activities, continues through the Reception Year.
- Children in Reception want to learn because they enjoy the topics. They also enjoy being part of the phonics groups and, as a result, make rapid progress with learning to read. Reading books are structured based on the sounds children have learned. Children do not move on to the next book in the scheme until they have thoroughly mastered the content of the previous book. Most-able children are confident and competent readers by the time they start Year 1. One parent commented: 'My children are very good readers – better than me at that age!'
- My fifth line of enquiry was to check whether the high proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities needing additional support are making as much progress as other pupils. The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo), makes sure that every pupil who starts at the school has an assessment to check their learning and emotional and social development. This provides you with an accurate and detailed baseline from which to check whether a pupil has SEN and/or disabilities and how best to meet their needs.
- The SENCo makes sure that where a pupil is identified as having SEN and/ or disabilities, provision is put in place to meet their needs, including input from external experts. For example, you have used some of your special needs funding to employ a speech and language therapist.
- The computer-based recording system enables the SENCo to check every pupil's progress from their starting point. If they do not make rapid progress, provision is evaluated and changed. Your own data indicates that all pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make the same strong progress from their starting points as others. Examples of pupils' work I scrutinised during the inspection support this view.
- The pastoral support team takes an active role in working with pupils who have emotional and behavioural difficulties and their families. There have been no permanent exclusions for three years and only one fixed-term exclusion this year due to this support and your effective approach to behaviour management, used by all staff.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils are confident to talk about their learning and new knowledge that they have gained.

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

Yours sincerely

Julie Winyard
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I spoke with you, the deputy headteacher, the governors, the pastoral support team, the staff, pupils and parents. We observed learning and teaching of phonics in all classes. Pupils in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 read to me. I scrutinised a range of documents, including your self-evaluation and school improvement plan. I scrutinised pupils' writing in English and other subjects with the deputy headteacher. I scrutinised a range of safeguarding documentation and a sample of pupil files. I scrutinised the six responses to Parent View, the online questionnaire for parents, and the 15 responses to the online staff questionnaire. There were no responses to the online pupil questionnaire.