

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
[www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)



25 September 2018

Mr Peter Johnston  
Headteacher  
Carsington and Hopton Primary School  
Carsington  
Matlock  
Derbyshire  
DE4 4DE

Dear Mr Johnston

### **Short inspection of Carsington and Hopton Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 11 September 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 November 2014.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

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

Carsington and Hopton is a very small school, which sits at the centre of the village community. There is a warm, welcoming atmosphere and pupils enjoy coming to school because it is 'fun'. Since the last inspection you have provided stability in leadership and formed a successful federation with another local school. This has increased the support and development available to the staff and has resulted in many positive outcomes across the curriculum as well as the day-to-day running of the school. As a team, you have worked hard to build the ethos and culture of the school in order to raise aspirations and ensure purposeful learning whilst maintaining an engaging curriculum. You have maintained areas identified at the last inspection as strengths. Values such as tolerance and respect are well communicated and central to the community. Parents praise the attention that is afforded to each family and appreciate the care that is taken by all staff to get to know their children as individuals. Governors are well informed, visit the school regularly and provide strong, strategic support as well as effective and appropriate challenge.

There has been significant investment in the building infrastructure to provide light, airy spaces where pupils can concentrate on learning. Every space is used creatively and displays around the school promote many aspects of pupils' work. The sincere relationships between all adults and pupils are built on trust and fostered through a friendly and caring environment.

Parents enthuse about the school and say that all staff are friendly and approachable. They welcome the open-door policy and feel very much involved in their children's education. Physical and mental well-being are given a high priority and developed through activities such as forest schools, enrichment visits and opportunities for camping.

The governing body is well informed and has a wide range of skills across the federation, which strengthens the leadership of the school. Governors have a secure understanding of the areas for development and are determined to ensure that progress towards these priorities is rapid. A commitment to training, combined with regular monitoring visits to school, ensures that the governors have the knowledge and experience to recognise and celebrate success as well as ask probing questions to ensure that the school is led effectively.

Leaders have systematically tackled many of the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. The curriculum has been designed to allow more opportunities for pupils to write at length and this is woven into different subjects. Careful consideration has been given to when it is appropriate to teach a specific style of writing during a topic cycle so that it has more meaning for the pupils. Year-group objectives are effectively used to support pupils with their writing in order to ensure that there is sufficient challenge for each pupil across the key stage.

There have been many changes to the teaching of mathematics, some of which are having a positive impact, particularly in key stage 1. However, progress in key stage 2 is not rapid enough. Although pupils have secure skills in number and calculation, teachers do not consistently give pupils enough time to apply these skills through open-ended investigations and word-based problems. In addition, assessments are not regular enough to assist teachers in planning the next steps in learning and to support pupils in making at least good progress during the year.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The annual audit by staff and governors ensures that all policy and procedures are current and closely followed by all those responsible for keeping the pupils safe. You, your staff and the governors take their responsibilities seriously and parents know that their children are in a safe and secure environment. All staff understand the indicators of abuse and are knowledgeable about the 'Prevent' duty and other national safeguarding issues. The investment in an online system has been instrumental in recording safeguarding issues that can be shared across the cluster so that all professionals have access to the relevant information to help keep pupils safe.

At all times during my visit the conduct and the behaviour of the children was of a very high standard. Indeed, I was impressed with pupils carrying their lunch on trays up and down the stairs in a sensible and responsible manner. The curriculum promotes learning to handle risk and pupils relish the opportunities to go sailing and participate in residential visits. Recognising the need to ensure that the older pupils

are aware of potential dangers online, staff have begun a programme of teaching current issues such as phishing. Pupils feel safe in school and are adamant there is no bullying. Pupils explained that there may be the odd playground squabble but this is quickly resolved as there is always an adult available from whom to seek help.

## **Inspection findings**

- The challenge of meeting the needs of mixed-age classes is embraced and for the most part is successful. Collaborative working within the federation, as well as the cluster of local schools, supports professional links with colleagues, sharing new research and ideas that are relevant to mixed-aged learning environments. The effective use of this network is increasing staff expertise and improving progress and outcomes for all pupils.
- There has been focused training resulting in an increase in staff knowledge in the teaching of phonics in early years and key stage 1. Rapid gains have been made as pupils who are struggling with specific sounds are given additional support. Pupils now have strong phonics knowledge which is giving them confidence to apply their skills and write at greater length.
- The investment in a wider selection of reading books, as well as more focused teaching strategies, has resulted in pupils, including those who are more able, making better progress in reading and writing throughout the school. The new home-school link books have been a positive step in encouraging more pupils to read regularly at home and promoting a love of books, as well as developing a greater understanding of writing and language. As a result, pupils are now making much better progress in reading and writing by the end of key stage 2.
- There is regular monitoring of the interventions used to support pupils with their learning. Careful consideration is given to the most effective use of staff who are deployed strategically to enhance the learning experiences of the pupils. Pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are very well supported and included in all aspects of school life.
- The considered purchase of a new scheme of work has added depth and structure to the teaching of mathematics. Teachers are planning together to ensure that there is consistency and continuity of learning. You have invested in some exciting online learning programs to support and improve the rapid recall of number facts, which you have identified as a weakness, particularly in key stage 2. You have employed a specialist external consultant to enhance the provision of mathematics throughout the school as you know that progress in mathematics is not good enough.
- The tracking system has been developed so that leaders can analyse the progress of pupils throughout the year. To improve the accuracy of information, more regular assessments of pupil knowledge and understanding will quickly identify pupils who need further support and ensure that effective provision is swiftly allocated to help that individual make better progress.

## **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they more precisely measure and evaluate the impact of teaching to enable pupils to make better progress and use their knowledge and skills to tackle reasoning and problem-solving tasks in mathematics
- all pupils are challenged and stretched enough to enable a greater proportion of them to achieve the highest levels of learning across the curriculum.

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

Yours sincerely

Kate Nash  
**Ofsted Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During this inspection, I discussed your own evaluation of the school and I shared my key lines of enquiry with you. We visited each class, spending a short time in each. I met with other members of staff, three governors, including the chair of the governing body, a group of pupils and a number of parents. I held discussions with different members of staff about safeguarding, attendance, behaviour, the curriculum and measuring pupils' progress. I spoke with the school improvement partner. Together, we looked at the pupils' work which was available. I examined the school's website to check that it meets the requirements on the publication of specified information. I analysed the 10 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for parents (from throughout the year), as well as your own recent parent questionnaire, six staff responses and two pupil responses to the Ofsted questionnaire.