

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
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Mrs Lorraine Gowland  
Headteacher  
Cestria Primary School  
Church Chare  
Chester-le-Street  
County Durham  
DH3 3PZ

Dear Mrs Gowland

### **Short inspection of Cestria Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 21 November 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 January 2015.

#### **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 your team have sustained high standards and a consistent pattern of improvement since the last inspection. With your deputy headteacher, you have strengthened leadership capacity at all levels and developed an inspirational curriculum. New leaders are taking increasing responsibility for improvement strategies that are having a tangible effect on the quality of teaching. These actions have contributed to consistently high outcomes for pupils over the last four years.

You have encouraged middle leaders to take on responsibilities for improving teaching and enhancing the curriculum with much success. They have worked with research partners and the local authority to develop new approaches to the English curriculum that have contributed to extremely high standards of reading and writing across the school. In mathematics, leaders have customised schemes of learning to build in increasing challenge for pupils. Middle leaders have enhanced teaching and the wider learning environment in the early years, although the proportion of children making stronger progress is less significant than at key stages 1 and 2. You have enhanced support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities

(SEND) and taken action to improve pupils' welfare and the rigour of the safeguarding arrangements.

Your development of your team has been underpinned by effective systems to check pupils' progress and the quality of teaching. You and your deputy headteacher have worked with teachers to develop a clear understanding of curriculum standards. Your team checks pupils' progress at regular intervals and works with teachers to address underachievement. In addition, you ensure that middle leaders check the effect of their actions through observations of learning and scrutiny of pupils' work and progress. This work has contributed to consistently effective teaching across the school. This combination of enhanced leadership, stronger monitoring systems and consistently high-quality teaching shows that you have convincingly addressed the areas for improvement identified in the last inspection.

You and your team have responded extremely well to the demands of the new national curriculum. You have worked to further raise expectations, contributing to consistently strong outcomes. Pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics has been in the top 20% of schools nationally for three years between 2015 and 2017. Unvalidated outcomes for 2018 are equally strong, reflecting a remarkable consistency in standards over time. You and your team also sustained strong outcomes for pupils in key stage 1, with the proportions of pupils achieving and exceeding expected standards well above those seen nationally. Pupils' workbooks show that these high standards are evident across year groups for current pupils.

In addition to high-quality provision in English and mathematics, you have developed an exciting wider curriculum that enables pupils to acquire deeper knowledge, skills and understanding across a wide range of subjects. You have created immersive days where pupils focus in depth on subjects such as science, design and food. You have created dedicated areas, such as the invention shed and the science room, where pupils are able to explore the wider curriculum in smaller groups with specialist staff. Pupils also develop their creativity through opportunities to consider artists' work and develop their own art skills in a range of media. Pupils in every year group take part in performance activities and this helps to develop their self-confidence and their creative expression.

This rich curriculum is supported by an impressive quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Your team maintains good relationships with pupils, who demonstrate positive attitudes to learning. Pupils behave well and work effectively alongside one another. They are keen to discuss their learning and share their conclusions. Pupils value their education and this is reflected in their extremely high rates of attendance, with absence rates in the lowest 10% of schools nationally.

Your governors have provided effective support and challenge. They appreciate the scale of consistent improvement that you and your team have sustained since the previous inspection. They have worked with local authority partners to gain objective insight into performance management processes and to seek external

validation of your work. You provide governors with regular updates on pupils' progress.

### **Safeguarding is effective**

The leadership team has ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You have increased the capacity of the team providing support for safeguarding and pupils' welfare. Your team has carried out an audit of safeguarding practice to check that policies and practice are up to date. Leaders make thorough checks on the suitability of adults working at the school. School leaders and members of staff undergo appropriate training to enable them to carry out their safeguarding responsibilities. Staff show a good awareness of safeguarding issues and the actions they should take if they have any concerns over pupils' welfare.

Pupils spoken with say that they feel safe in school and the vast majority of their parents and carers agree. They say that bullying is rare and that staff are effective in addressing any potential instances of bullying. Pupils were able to discuss the actions they could take to remain safe, for example the actions needed to stay safe online. Pupils have had opportunities to work with the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children to develop a better understanding of their welfare needs and rights.

### **Inspection findings**

- The consistently high outcomes that pupils have achieved in all subjects at the end of key stage 2 are reflected in the work of current pupils. Through consistently strong teaching, pupils develop richly attuned reading skills of inference and deduction. Your school has led on literacy developments in the local authority and this is reflected in the high quality of writing in pupils' books. Pupils are also becoming increasingly accomplished mathematicians as teachers provide increased opportunities for them to work at greater depths of understanding.
- The high expectations evident at key stage 2 are equally apparent at key stage 1. Pupils regularly achieve outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics that are well above their peers nationally, with substantial proportions of pupils working at greater depths of understanding. In Year 1, pupils demonstrated a convincing understanding of the links between letters and sounds. In Year 2, pupils focused upon mathematics problems with considerable focus and maturity. Pupils develop excellent attitudes to learning from an early stage. Work in books confirmed that pupils continue to make very good progress across year groups at key stage 1.
- Your team has enhanced the quality of teaching and learning opportunities in the early years since the previous inspection. They have developed an exceptional learning environment, where inspirational and well-resourced spaces support effective learning and play. Children are encouraged to read and write from an early stage and take pride in their emerging writing. Specialist staff provide focused support to assist pupils' physical development. Teachers check children's development carefully. Children regularly achieve levels of development that are

above their peers nationally, although the proportion exceeding early learning goals is less significant.

- You and your team have placed considerable emphasis on the development of the wider curriculum. You have invested in high-quality learning spaces for art, food, information and communication technology, design and science. These spaces are effectively used to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding across a wide range of subjects. In Year 2, pupils showed skill and attention in making their own pizzas, while also acquiring an understanding of the main food groups. In Year 6, pupils carried out experiments to explore the differences between hard and soft water and were able to give detailed explanations of the differences in mineral content. In art folders, pupils showed a considered awareness of the work of artists and, in geography, pupils showed a convincing knowledge of coastal environments. This breadth of understanding enhances pupils' learning and prepares them very well for the next stages of their learning.
- You and your team secure extremely positive attitudes to learning. Pupils are willing to explore problems, discuss findings and share their learning. Pupils develop the communication skills to work effectively in small groups but also show the necessary concentration when working independently.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they further enhance provision in the early years so that an increasing proportion of children make good progress from their starting points by exceeding the learning goals.

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

Yours sincerely

Malcolm Kirtley  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

As part of the inspection, I explored whether the consistently strong outcomes achieved at the end of key stage 2 – for four consecutive years – were evident in other year groups at key stages 1 and 2. I also explored the quality of provision and children's progress in the early years. I considered the quality of the wider curriculum and how well leaders had dealt with areas for improvement from the previous inspection.

During the inspection, I met with you, your deputy headteacher and a wide range of middle leaders. I also spoke with the chair and vice-chair of the governing body. I held a meeting with a group of pupils and discussed pupils' learning with them in lessons. I held a telephone conversation with the educational development partner from the local authority. I looked – with you – at learning in lessons. I also looked at pupils' work in books. I examined school improvement priorities and discussed pupils' progress. I looked at documents, including the school's self-evaluation, behaviour and attendance records and support plans for pupils with SEND. I examined safeguarding documents, including the single central record. I considered 54 responses to Ofsted's Parent View questionnaire and 33 free-text responses from parents. I also took into account 39 responses to the pupil questionnaire and 26 responses to the staff questionnaire.