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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
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Mrs Crissy Hodgkinson
Headteacher
Catherington Church of England Infant School
316 Catherington Lane
Catherington
Waterlooville
Hampshire
PO8 0TD

Dear Mrs Hodgkinson

Short inspection of Catherington Church of England Infant School

Following my visit to the school on 22 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 September 2014.

This school continues to be good.

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

After the last inspection, standards dipped and the school underwent some considerable turbulence in staffing and leadership. Since your appointment in September 2017 you have transformed the school, improving the quality of teaching and, consequently, pupils' outcomes. Last year, attainment in the early years and in phonics was broadly average. Pupils' attainment by the end of key stage 1 rose rapidly, especially in mathematics, so that an above-average proportion of pupils achieved the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics. Several pupils achieved standards above those expected for their age. Current pupils throughout the school are making much stronger progress than previous cohorts. The good progress that pupils make means that when pupils leave Catherington, they are fully prepared to continue their education at junior school.

Since the last inspection, governors have refocused their work and are now much more effective than in the past. Useful training from the local authority has been used to inform their improved understanding of their role. Governors hold the school to account well. They ask challenging questions of leaders, and conduct thorough monitoring visits to check how well the school is doing. Their work is contributing positively to the school's ongoing improvement.

You, leaders and governors have an accurate understanding of the strengths and

areas for improvement in the school. You use helpful advice from experts within the local authority to ensure that provision is strong. On your appointment, you rightly prioritised improving the quality of the curriculum so that it fully meets the requirements of the national curriculum. This year, new middle leaders are putting in place secure plans for further improvement, in particular by monitoring the changes made to the curriculum in writing and in mathematics to ensure that pupils make even better progress than in the past.

You and other leaders support staff carefully in making improvements to teaching, learning and assessment. You are, rightly, focused on making sure that teachers' planning considers carefully pupils' different starting points, specifically to ensure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported well and that the most able pupils are challenged in their learning. Staff welcome the additional support which is helping them to refine their practice and so ensure that pupils make good progress.

Pupils in your school are well behaved, happy and helpful. They like learning and like to be challenged. Pupils cooperate well with each other and are learning to become more independent. Pupils participate in a range of extra-curricular clubs, such as dance, football and mindfulness. They enjoy the trips and visits, which add to their excitement at learning, such as the recent visit to a local museum which kick-started their topic about the Titanic.

You provide numerous opportunities for pupils to develop an understanding of British and Christian values. For example, they know to be 'courageous' when trying something new. Pupils develop a strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. For example, pupils learned about the importance of respecting others and of celebrating difference through a recent assembly about the civil rights activist, Rosa Parks. You make sure that pupils participate in community events, such as recently when pupils created a line of paper poppies to commemorate the local men who died in the First World War.

Staff, governors, parents and carers are full of praise for the school. They say that teachers are approachable and keep them well informed about pupils' progress and any issues. Parents recognise the improvements you have made to the school, including to the quality of teaching and the curriculum. One summed up the views of many, 'My daughters are developing superbly into confident and ambitious learners. This is down to the headteacher's excellent leadership.'

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors have made sure that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. The curriculum provides many opportunities for pupils to learn about staying safe. For example, pupils learn how to cross the busy road outside of the school safely and about the risks associated with strangers. Pupils feel safe in school. They told me that an adult would help them if they were worried about anything.

Checks on the suitability of adults working in the school are thorough and the up-to-

date single central record is accurate. Adults are fully aware of the latest government advice about child protection and safeguarding. They adopt an 'it could happen here' approach which ensures that they are vigilant about possible risks to pupils. Leaders maintain thorough records of concerns and make appropriate use of other agencies, for example to take advice or to seek additional help to support pupils' welfare. Governors monitor safeguarding well, including through checking staff and pupils' understanding of procedures and practice.

Inspection findings

- After the last inspection, standards in the early years declined, but they have risen again over the last year. This is because of the effective work by leaders in evaluating the early years provision and making subsequent swift changes so that it is much more effective. The current environment is designed well to allow children to follow their interests across the whole curriculum. For example, during my visit children's imaginations were stimulated by the 'rocket' play house as they role-played looking for aliens. Leaders recognise that children are capable of making even faster progress than previous cohorts. Current children benefit from a wide range of activities designed to make sure that they gain a strong start in developing their writing and mathematics skills.
- At the last inspection, the school was asked to raise the achievement of the most able pupils. This has now been achieved. In reading, the proportion of pupils achieving the greater depth standard by the end of key stage 1 has been consistently around the national average. Last year, the proportion achieving greater depth in writing and mathematics rose significantly to also be broadly average. This improvement has been achieved because teachers throughout the school are planning challenging activities to stretch the most able pupils. Nevertheless, there is more to do to ensure that pupils are consistently challenged from their different starting points.
- The quality of teaching and the curriculum in mathematics are much improved. Pupils are adept at using mathematical resources to help them to understand the meaning of numbers. They benefit from frequent opportunities to solve problems and to explain their reasoning. Well-trained adults support pupils' learning in mathematics well, especially in asking questions which encourage pupils to think hard. Adults identify any gaps in pupils' understanding, and plan to remove these gaps quickly. Pupils are developing their independence. For example, they make well-considered choices about which resources will best help them learn. As a result, outcomes in mathematics throughout the school have risen. Several pupils told me that mathematics is their favourite subject.
- Leaders know that, although outcomes in phonics match those of pupils nationally, some pupils could do even better. They have changed how phonics is taught, using extra adults to help pupils and children learn phonics from their different starting points. Adults check carefully what pupils know and can remember, reinforcing skills with extra teaching where necessary. Well-planned, interesting activities allow pupils to embed their understanding of phonics and to use their phonics skills when reading and writing. This is working, as a higher proportion of pupils are on track to meet the expected standards of the phonics

check than in the past.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- activities to challenge the most able pupils are consistently matched well to their starting points
- middle leaders review and refine recent changes to the curriculum, so that pupils make even better progress across the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Catherine Old
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you to discuss your self-evaluation and your plans for improvement. We also discussed the work the school does to safeguard pupils. You and I visited all classrooms and spoke with pupils about their learning. I met with governors to discuss their strategic oversight of the school. A telephone conversation was held with a representative of the local authority to discuss the monitoring and support it provides. I met with leaders of English and mathematics to discuss the school's work to develop pupils' literacy and numeracy skills and to review a sample of pupils' work. I met with the leader of the early years to discuss the provision. I spoke to several parents in the playground before school. The 37 survey responses submitted by parents were scrutinised, including free-text responses. I took account of the views expressed in the 10 survey responses submitted by staff. I considered the 23 survey responses submitted by pupils. I checked documentation relating to safeguarding, behaviour, attendance, monitoring records, policies, minutes of the governing body's meetings, pupils' performance information and the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans.