

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

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



14 February 2019

Jane Segust  
Headteacher  
The Shade Primary School  
The Shade  
Soham  
Ely  
Cambridgeshire  
CB7 5DE

Dear Mrs Segust

### **Short inspection of The Shade Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 29 January 2019, 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 May 2015.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since you became headteacher in September 2018 you have earned the support and respect of parents and carers because their children love coming to school and are excited about learning. One parent summed up the views of many, saying: 'I have two children in The Shade and I get comments from both of them saying how much they love to go to school, even on the weekends ... the stories they tell me every night reflect a lot about what they have learned and how much they enjoyed that learning process.' Leaders are clear in their determination to develop pupils as curious and enquiring learners who think deeply about their lessons.

There is a clear sense of purpose at the school. Your work on developing pupils as life-long learners makes them confident. Pupils are not afraid to make mistakes, challenge themselves to achieve and keep trying, even with difficult work. Consequently, pupils make good progress from their individual starting points. They also acquire a love of learning and a thirst for knowledge. One pupil told me: 'We learn about what is going to help us in the future – but it is also fun. We work with our teachers to get better and better.' Good behaviour is also a characteristic of The Shade. Pupils are focused on learning so they behave extremely well in lessons and around the school.

The school will have its first Year 6 group in September 2019. Leaders are planning for this carefully. They have considered how pupils will progress through the school and how to best equip them with the right knowledge and skills that they will need to help them excel at secondary school.

Governance is strong. Governors have a range of skills and are very supportive of the innovative culture you promote. They ensure that there is appropriate support and challenge for you and your leadership team while sharing your passion for the school.

At the last inspection, the school comprised of Reception and Year 1 only. The lead inspector set several areas for improvement required in those groups. There has been a very positive response to the improvements. Teachers were asked to provide pupils with practical equipment most suited to the tasks they have been set in mathematics. All classes and learning activities are now extremely well resourced. Specifically, in mathematics, there is routinely a wide range of tools and equipment present on work tables. Pupils make a discerning selection as to the most helpful and appropriate equipment to solve the problem set for them.

The lead inspector also asked leaders to ensure that more activities in the early years promote children's thinking, creativity and investigative skills. I observed a wide range of interesting and compelling activities planned for children in Reception. For example, a visit from the air ambulance service took place on the morning of my visit. Children were helped to prepare searching questions. I saw teachers and teaching assistants skilfully supporting learners' choices and allowing them to investigate their own curious questions and interesting ideas by being flexible and appreciative. Parents have open access to additional resources and are encouraged to borrow toys, books and games to continue the learning at home.

Additionally, leaders were asked to ensure that children have access to climbing equipment to promote their physical development. An attractive new external climbing complex and climbing wall is now available. In the early years, there are significant number of activities designed for indoors and outside and they are having a positive impact on children's physical development.

Leaders were asked to ensure that teachers challenge the most able pupils by providing work that is difficult enough for them, especially in writing. I observed teachers skilfully use structured activities and incisive questioning to extend and develop all pupils' learning and specifically their writing. I observed that teaching assistants and volunteers were making a very noticeable positive impact on the progress of groups and individuals. Choosing an appropriately challenging task is confidently accomplished by all. I saw frequent examples of pupils from all starting points choosing from a range of tasks (mild, hot and spicy are the terms that work for your pupils) and progressing with learning independently.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Records are well organised and fastidiously maintained so that important details are not missed.

Leaders have a good knowledge of the specific risks within the locality and therefore they are vigilant and proactive on behalf of pupils. Early support and interventions are well thought out and readily available for families. You work closely with all agencies and encourage parents to seek support when it is required. Timely preventative action

effectively protects pupils from harm. Leaders have created a safe and happy environment in which pupils can learn and develop.

## **Inspection findings**

- During the inspection, I followed key lines of enquiry to find out whether the school remained good. The first of these was to check that the curriculum you have put in place is supporting all pupils to make rapid progress from their starting points. You have placed an emphasis on pupils understanding themselves as learners and opening up new experiences, both in and beyond the classroom. You expect high standards in English, mathematics and science but also consider physical education, humanities subjects and the arts as very important. Leaders have designed a curriculum that is well suited to pupils' needs and interests.
- Pupils enjoy lessons and are absolutely committed to their learning. You have ensured that staff have high-quality training in place to underpin the implementation of the curriculum. There is excellent subject leadership within the school; however, as the school grows, the work to prepare for the Year 6 is ongoing but incomplete.
- Since the last inspection, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development by the end of their time in the Reception class has been consistently above the national average. However, children are not developing the language and communication skills they require to exceed the early learning goals in this area of learning. Early years leaders have correctly identified developing language and communication skills as a priority. They have put a range of helpful initiatives in place to help children to express and develop their ideas and questions in the most effective way.
- Writing has an important role in the school curriculum and leaders are determined to improve the quality of writing across the school for pupils of all abilities. Teachers take a creative approach to the teaching of writing across all year groups by exploring ideas and intent through talk and drama and mapping out storylines and narratives in preparation.
- Leaders' emphasis on improving access to a greater range of high-quality reading texts is also having a positive impact on writing as pupils are exposed to skilled writers of renown. Pupils are taught how to use language in a powerful and interesting way and most are able write in detail and at length according to their age. Many elements of pupils' writing have, therefore, improved. Even so, the work I saw in pupils' books showed that spelling, punctuation and grammar skills are not as well developed to support the excellent authorship and advanced vocabulary that pupils are achieving.
- Disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are making strong progress. This is because they are able to access the exciting curriculum through carefully planned interventions and their own specific targets. Leaders have high expectations for every pupil and constantly reflect on the quality of each pupil's experience, especially if they have to overcome some challenging barriers to learning.
- My next line of enquiry explored the ways in which school leaders are forming a positive and informative relationship with parents as the school grows. I also considered a further action point from the school's previous inspection which asked leaders to ensure that parents receive further guidance about supporting their children's learning at home in

writing and mathematics.

- I found that in addition to regular meetings with parents to provide accurate information on how well their children make progress, parents also value the new online communication platform. One parent summed up other positive Parent View comments by saying, 'Great interaction ... it is great to see what my children get up to during the day.' Improved communication means that parents can have daily, focused, constructive learning discussions about their children either by using the communication platform or in person. You also provide valuable opportunities for parents to meet with parent support workers, the speech and language therapist and the play therapist.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- existing strong practice is used to strengthen subject leadership across all curriculum subjects so that good outcomes can be sustained as the school grows
- language and communication skills are developed even further in the early years so that children excel as they progress through the school
- spelling, punctuation and grammar is taught to a high standard.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Cambridgeshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Elizabeth Cornish  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

- I observed teaching and learning in all classrooms, including early years groups. You and I undertook two joint learning walks during which we observed and discussed pupils' learning and behaviour.
- Meetings were held with pupils, governors and school leaders. I also spoke informally with pupils in their lessons about the work they were doing and the progress they were making.
- I met with you and the special educational needs coordinator to discuss provision and progress for pupils with SEND. I also met with the deputy headteacher to explore the impact of additional interventions put in place for disadvantaged pupils.
- I evaluated recent information in relation to pupils' progress throughout the school, the school's self-evaluation document, the school improvement plan and a sample of monitoring records.
- I looked at work in pupils' books and on display. I also looked at a range of

documentation, including minutes from governing body meetings and attendance records.

- I also met with you as designated safeguarding leader and I reviewed documentation and records about how you keep pupils safe.
- I took account of 20 staff questionnaires, 71 pupil questionnaires and the 67 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire.