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Mr James Procter
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Dear Mr Procter

Short inspection of Chiddingly Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 14 May 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 November 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You are committed to ensuring that pupils receive a good education and the best opportunities for their future lives. Strong leadership has led to an improvement in pupils' outcomes since the last inspection. Leaders and staff make good use of being part of a federation, using the skills of the staff of all three schools to support and develop the school. Pupils gain from taking part in shared learning experiences with the pupils in the other schools. The wider community comes together to support learning for all.

Pupils enjoy the family feel of their small school. They say that it is easy to make friends. They are proud of their responsibilities and the difference that they can make to school life as pupil governors and learning ambassadors. Pupils behave well in school. They understand and support the behaviour policy. They want to behave well and enjoy the rewards, such as the certificates, headteacher's badge and the chance to be in the VIP area at playtime. Pupils concentrate well in class, listen attentively to the staff and are absorbed in their work. They appreciate their teachers, saying that they are kind and care for them. There is a culture of trying to do your best, with pupils understanding what they are learning and why. They value the school's guidance to help them become better learners and reflect on the way that they learn. Parents and carers are highly supportive of the school. One parent expressed the views of many, saying, 'Chiddingly is a great little school'. Several praised the leadership, staff and the support that they have received for their children.

Alongside your governors and staff, you are continually improving and developing the school. In the past year, you have focused on improving reading and further developing the curriculum. The English leader has introduced a range of new approaches to supporting reading in key stage 2. This has raised the profile of reading for older pupils and they are making stronger rates of progress than previously. However, some older pupils find it difficult to read and understand complex words and ideas in the books that they are reading. You have addressed this by teaching more comprehension and vocabulary, but this has not had enough impact on skills for some pupils. You have built on your already strong curriculum and designed an exciting new curriculum that is fit for the future and will strengthen pupils' learning even further. You have begun to introduce elements of this in class. This means that teachers are planning learning to more closely match to pupils' needs and interests. You have also matched quality texts to other areas of the curriculum to support the reading skills.

At the previous inspection, you were asked to ensure that there was high-quality teaching, time to consolidate and practise mathematical skills and improve spelling punctuation and grammar. You were also asked to raise attainment in English and mathematics, and ensure that shared leadership was making a difference and that staff felt supported. You have addressed all of these issues successfully. The introduction of a new spelling scheme and more emphasis on the teaching of grammar have resulted in improved spelling standards and better use of grammar and punctuation throughout the school. Pupils make good progress in all subjects. You are committed to developing staff and they appreciate the faith that you have in their abilities.

Safeguarding is effective.

Parents, pupils and staff all agree that the school is a safe place. Leaders have ensured that systems for safeguarding and health and safety are thorough and effective. School staff conscientiously ensure that the single central record of recruitment checks on all adults who work in the school is carefully maintained. All the relevant safeguarding training is in place and staff are confident that they know what to do if there are any concerns about pupils. Governors monitor safeguarding regularly. You keep meticulous records regarding your work with agencies, such as social care. Vulnerable pupils are monitored daily, with regular reports provided for senior staff and governors.

E-safety is a strength. Pupils experience regular termly teaching about how to keep themselves safe online. They are reminded by posters throughout the school. Parents have a wide range of advice and support through the website. A very few parents feel that there have been some issues with bullying. Pupils say that there is very little bullying and where it occurs it is swiftly resolved by staff. Pupils say that there is always a member of staff to talk to about any matter whenever they need it. Documents show that bullying is taken very seriously by leadership, and that pupils and parents are fully involved in the response and resolution. Rigorous monitoring, clear expectations, conversations with parents and rewards for pupils

have resulted in improved rate of attendance. This is now in line with the national average for primary schools. Persistent absence has substantially reduced and very few pupils now attend school irregularly.

Inspection findings

- We agreed to focus on: safeguarding and attendance; pupils' progress in reading in key stage 2; the development of middle leaders; and the curriculum.
- Recognising that standards of reading were below national averages in key stage 2 for the past three years, the English leader has trained staff, increased the amount of time on the timetable dedicated to reading activities, encouraged pupils to read more at home and ensured that comprehension teaching uses extracts from challenging texts. Pupils know that more is expected of them now and they say that they are better readers than they were last year. However, pupils often choose to read books they bring in from home. These books are not always well matched to the pupils' reading ability. Some pupils' reading progress is hampered because they can decode the words in the books but lack comprehension of the story that they are reading.
- School leaders pride themselves on recognising and developing leadership talent in the school. You empower staff and encourage them to take on responsibilities. You have trained them, and they have benefited from working alongside colleagues in the federation. Subject leaders are enthusiastic, hard-working and committed to school improvement. They are skilled in analysing what needs to be done in their area of responsibility, formulating effective action plans and improving teaching and learning through training, advising and developing staff. Strong middle leadership, staff teamwork and the culture of school improvement have led to improving classroom practice throughout the school. Pupils say that their lessons are interesting and that they enjoy learning. Pupils make good progress, including those who are disadvantaged and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The curriculum is a strength of the school. All the core subjects are integrated into the cross-curricular work. Pupils show pride in their work. Topic books are attractive and well presented. Pupils enjoy the topics and the enrichment days and activities that staff plan for them. Local volunteer visitors and local visits make the topics relevant and interesting. During the inspection, pupils told me that they understood a fact about engineering, because they had seen it in action at the i360 on a visit to Brighton. Specific subject knowledge is well taught within the topic work; for example, pupils write up experiments in a scientific manner. Staff help pupils focus on skills for learning as well as knowledge and understanding and pupils appreciate the opportunities they have to challenge themselves in their learning.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- continue to develop pupils' comprehension and vocabulary throughout the school

- implement the new curriculum in all classes throughout the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Lesley Corbett
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and your head of school, two governors, a group of pupils, some staff and the school secretary. I held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. We visited every classroom together to observe teaching and learning. I listened to some pupils read. I considered 21 responses to the Ofsted staff questionnaire and 35 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. In addition, I examined 20 free-text comments from parents. A range of the school's documents were also taken into account, including: leaders' self-evaluation and improvement planning; minutes of the governing body's meetings; and safeguarding checks, policies and procedures.