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Mr Iain Horner
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Dear Mr Horner

Short inspection of Chesterton Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 7 March 2017, 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 February 2013.

This school continues to be good.

Since your arrival in September 2015 your enthusiasm and determination has galvanised both pupils and parents. They share your ambition and passion for the future. You have been extremely well supported by able senior leaders, knowledgeable governors and eager staff who are keen to improve the school further. You have put in place effective professional development for staff. As a result, teaching skills are continually improving. Leaders' regular checks demonstrate that this training has had a positive impact on pupils' progress.

Pupils immerse themselves fully in a wide range of high-quality learning experiences across the curriculum. This learning is focused typically to strengthen pupils' progress in the core areas of mathematics and English. Consequently, pupils have practised, developed and applied their key skills through completing tasks in a range of different and challenging contexts.

Children in the early years make good progress. Teaching is effective and there is a sharp focus on developing children's key skills both inside the classroom and in the outside learning area. Assessment is used well to identify when children are making significant progress in their learning and when they need more support. Staff use this information to quickly adapt activities to ensure that children's learning accelerates rapidly.

You enjoy high levels of support from parents who describe the school's strong, caring and supportive nature as a significant strength. Parents were unanimous in stating that they would recommend Chesterton to others. Those parents I spoke to during the inspection were very enthusiastic about the way the school cares for and helps their children to learn.

Subject leadership is effective. For example, the mathematics subject leader has successfully tackled previously weaker areas of pupils' mathematical learning. She has developed teachers' skills in helping pupils to explain how they carry out their calculations when solving problems. This is leading to better rates of progress for all groups of pupils. Pupils' skills in English are good and continuing to improve well. The new assessment system clearly identifies the specific writing skills that groups of pupils need to develop. The subject leader for English has put in place strategies to increase pupils' progress in reading. She regularly checks the impact of these actions. There is substantial evidence that the school's approach to improving pupils' reading comprehension skills is having a positive impact on their understanding of different and complex texts. Pupils across a range of abilities read confidently and with understanding.

At the school's previous inspection, the area for improvement was to increase the proportion of pupils who exceed nationally expected rates of progress in English and mathematics. Teaching and learning are effective and have resulted in good progress. This is because you check closely that teaching is consistently good and you provide training to staff to keep skill levels and subject knowledge high. However, there are times when the level of challenge is not as high as it needs to be in English and mathematics. This slows the rate of progress for the most able pupils.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. All records are detailed and of high quality. Careful safeguarding checks are carried out when recruiting staff, governors and volunteers. Leaders have updated the safeguarding policy to ensure that the current child protection requirements are met, and all staff understand the procedures. Staff are kept well informed about child protection matters through comprehensive training. They share appropriately with safeguarding leaders any concerns they have regarding pupils' safety.

Pupils say that when they have any concerns staff listen and support them well. They know that adults will help resolve any incidents that occur. Parents are united in agreement that their children feel safe at school and gave examples of when staff have helped successfully with difficulties. The school works effectively with parents and outside agencies to ensure that pupils are safe. Positive relationships, alongside leaders' very good knowledge of pupils and their families, strengthen the school's safeguarding work. Consequently, pupils flourish, both academically and personally, in this nurturing environment.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection I looked closely at specific aspects, including how well middle attaining pupils are developing their reading, writing and mathematical skills in key stage 1. I also looked at the progress pupils make in reading and writing at key stage 2. I reviewed the progress in English made by pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Work in pupils' books shows that the standard achieved by middle-attaining pupils in reading and writing by the end of key stage 1 is rising. This group of pupils use a wide range of vocabulary and punctuation in their writing.
- Pupils make good progress in mathematics. By the end of key stage 1, more pupils are reaching or exceeding the expected standard for their age. Pupils make good progress during Years 1 and 2 because they are using their mathematical skills in a wide range of contexts. Consequently, pupils are prepared well for tackling more challenging learning in key stage 2.
- Pupils make good progress in reading in key stage 2. You have put in place a successful school-wide approach to reading to ensure that pupils' outcomes are closely in line with national expectations. Typically, pupils' read fluently and build knowledge and understanding successfully from the texts they read.
- Pupils' progress in writing is strong in key stage 2. You ensure that teaching provides opportunities for pupils to apply their writing skills in a range of subjects. Current assessments indicate that standards are rising.
- The most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, make good progress overall in mathematics and English. However, they are not challenged highly enough in order for them to make the really rapid progress they are capable of.
- Pupils who need to catch up make rapid progress in writing. They write with confidence and increasing fluency. Pupils write to convey meaning well and they can write for a range of audiences using adventurous language. They show they can use their knowledge of phonics to help them spell a wide range of words.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make typically good progress. The quality of their writing is improving because they are using more sophisticated vocabulary and more complex sentence structures. Teaching assistants provide effective support to ensure that pupils develop their understanding and skills.
- The teaching of phonics is structured well and carefully matched to pupils' levels of development. This ensures that pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities quickly develop secure reading skills. Support in small groups is effective because staff ensure that pupils make accurate links between letters and sounds, and use these skills consistently when reading unfamiliar words.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers provide effective challenge for the most able pupils so that they make rapid progress in English and mathematics.

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

Yours sincerely

Richard Blackmore
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I had discussions with you and other leaders, governors and a local authority representative. I spoke with pupils, observed them learning and looked at their work. I spoke with parents as they collected their children at the end of the school day. I evaluated a range of school documentation, including leaders' evaluation of the school's effectiveness and their action plans, pupil performance information and other school policies and safeguarding records. I took account of 71 responses from parents to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View.