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Mr Andrew Ind
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Dear Mr Ind

Short inspection of Cherhill CofE School

Following my visit to the school on 17 July 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 November 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have taken concerted action to gain an accurate picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses since taking up your post in January 2018. You have been particularly diligent in enlisting the support of leaders at all levels, including governors, to agree the school's priorities and drive improvement. Your work in sustaining the high standard of pupils' behaviour and values based on Christian principles, secured by your predecessors, has led to you being well regarded by the vast majority of parents. For example, parents' responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, typically included, 'Feeling positive with new leadership, the school is reaching out to parents.'

As a team, leaders have raised expectations of what pupils can achieve. The impetus currently is focused on ensuring that attainment in mathematics and writing matches the high standard in reading. You continue to implement effective initiatives to further improve teaching and learning to achieve these desired outcomes. These initiatives include changes in the way phonics and mathematics are taught, which are already improving pupils' progress across the school.

Leaders have responded well to the areas identified for improvement in the previous inspection. Most notably, leaders have transformed provision and children's outcomes in Reception from a concern to a strength of the school. Teachers, in line with revised school policy, have improved the feedback and level of challenge they

present to pupils to increase their progress. In addition, teachers in all classes now more productively develop pupils' writing across the range of subjects. Currently, however, the most able pupils in Years 1 to 4 do not make consistently good progress.

Safeguarding is effective.

A strong culture of safeguarding is embedded in the heart of school. School records and my discussions with staff show that they are up to date in their training and know what action to take should they believe a pupil is in danger. This includes guidance in protecting pupils from extremism and terrorism. Governors are knowledgeable and diligent in checking leaders' actions to secure effective safeguarding procedures. For example, they undertake regular checks of the site security and ensure that facilities are fit for purpose. Staff are well trained in safeguarding. Leaders, with efficient support from administrative staff, make sure that the single central record includes all the required checks and ensures that those who work with children are fit and proper to do so.

Leaders and staff know the pupils well, especially those whose circumstances make them vulnerable. They keep detailed records and, as necessary, work closely with external agencies and parents to keep these pupils safe. Pupils told the inspector that they feel safe at school and 'Would have no hesitation in telling an adult if they had any concerns.' Pupils also talked about how they keep each other safe at breaktimes and take care when using computers. All the parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, agreed that their children feel safe at school, and the overwhelming majority also agreed that they are well cared for.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry was to check the effectiveness of leaders and teachers in improving pupils' progress in mathematics across key stage 2. This is because some pupils have not made the rapid progress needed for them to fully deepen their mathematical understanding. Over the course of this academic year, leaders and teachers have sustained a strong emphasis on extending pupils' reasoning and problem-solving skills in mathematics. Teachers in all classes have adapted the curriculum to enable pupils to use and apply these mathematical skills and to develop them across the range of subjects. This has helped to cultivate pupils' understanding of the relevance of mathematics and stimulated their interest and confidence. This is evident in pupils' work in books in the form of historical timelines of the Viking conquests and recording share price movements on a stock market transaction sheet. Pupils' improved skills and deepened understanding are evident as they thoughtfully explain their ideas for solving problems. Currently, an increased proportion of pupils in Year 6 have attained higher standards than did so last year. Pupils' improving calculation and reasoning skills show the degree to which strengthened teaching of mathematics is embedded in all classes and continues to have a positive impact on pupils' progress.

- My second line of enquiry was to explore the effectiveness of leaders' and teachers' work to improve pupils' writing. I also examined the proportion of pupils attaining greater depth in writing, particularly at the end of Year 2. At times, variations in teachers' expectations, particularly across Years 1 to 4, have slowed the development of pupils' basic writing skills. In recent terms, leaders and teachers have strengthened the focus on extending pupils' vocabulary and improved teaching of phonics. As in mathematics, leaders have ensured that teachers adapt the curriculum to provide interesting experiences that stimulate pupils' creativity and ability to write imaginatively. For example, pupils write expressively about topics such as an imaginary 'teleported journey' to the World Cup football competition. Teachers are placing an effective emphasis on questioning pupils to develop their speaking skills and widen their vocabulary. Notably, this was seen, for example, in Year 5 when pupils were explaining their 'Coffee-Shop' purchases. At times, through Years 1 to 4, pupils' ability to write at greater depth is restricted by less-developed skills in spelling, grammar and punctuation. Work in pupils' books indicates that teachers have been targeting these aspects more specifically this year to bridge gaps in previous learning. Currently, however, unlike the pupils' consistently strong progress in Year 5 and Year 6 classes, there is still variation in the quality of pupils' writing across Years 1 to 4. As a result, some pupils are not attaining the greater depth they are capable of reaching in their writing skills.
- My next line of enquiry evaluated the effectiveness of leaders' and teachers' actions to improve pupils' phonic knowledge by the end of Years 1 and 2. This was because there has been variation in the proportion of pupils reaching expected standards in the Years 1 and 2 phonic screening checks in recent years. Over the past year, leaders have introduced and established consistent and effective phonics teaching across Reception and Years 1 and 2 classes. Teachers have strengthened the way they assess and meet the specific needs of individual pupils and are now successfully improving pupils' progress. This is evident in the increased proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the Year 1 phonic screening check. Pupils' phonic knowledge is also seen in the way they use their knowledge of individual letter sounds to work out unfamiliar words when reading.
- Finally, I examined the steps taken by leaders to improve pupils' attendance and particularly to reduce persistent absence. Most pupils' attendance is good, but the overall rate of attendance is below average. This is because a small number of pupils are persistently absent. Since your appointment, you have updated and established clear procedures for dealing with persistent absence. These procedures detail the forms of communication and steps the school will take with parents and outside agencies should absence be avoidable. As a result, in recent terms, in response to your rigorous action, persistent absence has reduced and some of the pupils now attend well. You continue to take this determined action to ensure that absence does not impede pupils' progress.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils develop their writing skills more rapidly and effectively, especially across Years 1 to 4, so that more demonstrate greater depth in writing for their age
- attendance continues to improve, particularly for pupils who are frequently absent.

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

Yours sincerely

Alexander Baxter
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you and other staff who have leadership responsibilities, and with governors of the school. I visited classrooms with you and we collected and scrutinised samples of pupils' work in books. I talked with individual pupils during visits to classrooms. I observed teachers hearing selected pupils read and talking to them about their reading. I observed lunchtime arrangements and talked with pupils and staff. In addition, I examined a range of documents relating to safeguarding, pupils' attendance, pupils' progress and the school's self-evaluation and development. I took account of 31 responses to the Ofsted online Parent View survey, 31 additional written comments from parents and the views of 19 staff expressed in their survey.