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Mr Darryl Pickering
Headteacher
Cambridge Road Community Primary and Nursery School
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Dear Mr Pickering

Short inspection of Cambridge Road Community Primary and Nursery School

Following my visit to the school on 18 July 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 December 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You and your senior leaders have a good grasp of the school's strengths and areas for development and you are quick to take action to secure improvement when you identify a need.

A large proportion of your pupils start school with a range of social and developmental needs. They enter Nursery with knowledge and skills that are below those typical for their age. Most pupils make good progress in their time at the school and the majority usually leave with the knowledge, skills and understanding they need to go on to secondary school.

You have a strong determination to give your pupils the best experience of school that is possible. You have had external recognition for this, in the award of two 'Quality Marks', one for your work in developing pupils' basic skills and the other for ensuring that the school is an inclusive environment. Displays around the school indicate the prominence you give to the promotion of fundamental British values and to celebrating diversity. You also support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. For example, you provide a wide range of clubs, such as choir, yoga and fencing. You also deepen pupils' understanding of other belief systems, including humanism, through 'faith weeks', where visitors enhance the teaching of religious education by discussing their beliefs with pupils.

You have addressed the areas for improvement identified in the last inspection report. Until 2015, there were increased proportions of Year 6 pupils reaching the higher levels in national tests. Although these were not always at the national average, they represented improvement on previous performance. After a dip in 2016, unvalidated assessment information for 2017 presents an improved picture again, especially in writing and in mathematics.

There has also been an improvement in making sure that pupils do work that is demanding enough. Evidence from short visits to classrooms and from pupils' workbooks show that teachers mostly plan work that is well matched to pupils' abilities and provide suitably challenging work for the most able.

Another area for improvement concerned marking pupils' books. It was clear from looking at pupils' workbooks during this inspection that teachers consistently apply the school's marking policy, which means that pupils understand how to improve and what their next steps are.

You devise appropriate plans for school improvement. You identify actions that focus on improving pupils' achievement and these are effective, as pupils make good progress from their starting points. You also include clear criteria for measuring success. You regularly analyse assessment information and you promptly amend your plans to allow for areas for development that this information indicates.

You have thorough processes for checking on the quality of teaching and learning in the school. You set targets for staff that focus them on enabling their pupils to achieve to the best of their ability and you provide training to help them in this. Staff say they appreciate this training and that it improves their practice. You carry out observations of lessons and analyse pupils' work. You give written reports to staff that outline strengths and areas to improve. These processes secure good and improving teaching. However, you recognise that your evaluations about the progress pupils make in their workbooks do not relate precisely to the knowledge, understanding and skills you expect them to have.

I met with a group of Year 6 pupils during the inspection. They all enjoy coming to school because they learn new things and have fun. They also said that the premises are secure, making them feel safe. They like the opportunities you and your staff give them to broaden their experience of learning, from trips to London to playing wheelchair rugby in 'sports week'.

There were very few responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey. All responses were positive and parents made comments about the good progress that their children make and about how approachable staff in school are.

The local authority has placed the school on a 'universal' grading, which means that the adviser makes fewer visits than to other schools because there are no pressing concerns about standards. The adviser knows the school well and provides effective support and advice.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. You keep carefully organised reports of safeguarding concerns and you pursue issues with other agencies, such as social services, when you need to do so. You now have an electronic system to record concerns, which also allows you to make connections with other aspects of pupils' welfare and safety. The school's register of checks on members of staff who work with pupils is compliant with guidance.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Staff clearly understand reporting processes and they know how to recognise signs of different types of abuse. Adults effectively teach pupils how to keep themselves safe, for example on the internet. Pupils understand the different forms of bullying, including homophobic and racist. There are very few recorded incidents in school and none of a racist or homophobic character. On the rare occasions when bullying does happen, leaders manage it promptly and effectively.

Inspection findings

- Throughout the inspection, I followed a number of key lines of enquiry, based on analysis I had carried out before I arrived at your school. I shared these with you at the start of the day. I have reported on some aspects previously in this letter.
- One of my lines of enquiry concerned progress for current children, including boys and disadvantaged children, in the early years. Almost all children enter Nursery with skills and knowledge below those that are typical for their age. Children, including boys and disadvantaged children, make strong progress from their low starting points during their time in the early years. By the time they leave Reception, usually over half of the children are ready for Year 1. This is because the early years leader and her staff teach children effectively and support those who need extra help with their learning. Children make good progress in their writing and in their number work. For example, by the end of Reception, most-able children write sentences such as 'The sun is a big ball of gas' and calculate subtractions like $13 - 10 = 3$. Provisional assessment information for 2017 indicates that 60% of children achieved a good level of development, the highest proportion the school has ever reached. While the early years environment contains plenty of activities that constantly support children's development of language well, you accept that activities supporting their mathematical development are fewer in number.
- Another focus was the effectiveness of the teaching of phonics in Year 1. From low starting points, pupils make good and improving progress. Leaders have unconfirmed assessment information that shows that 72% of pupils achieved the expected standard in the phonics screening check, the highest ever level for the school. Phonics teaching is effective overall. For example, lower-ability pupils give good examples of words using complex sounds like 'ph' and 'wr'. However, sometimes teachers do not give pupils the chance to use a variety of their senses as they learn, which occasionally leads to some pupils losing concentration.

- I also explored how well pupils, especially boys, in key stage 1 progress in writing and mathematics. Pupils typically make good progress from their starting points in both these subjects. In writing in Year 2, for example, lower-ability pupils, including boys, advance from insecure attempts at sentences, like 'I love play on my PSE', to quite complex sentence structures for their level of development, such as 'A bat is a noctenl (nocturnal) animal.' In mathematics in Year 1, for instance, pupils, including boys, who can barely write numerals accurately at the start of the year, can confidently add amounts of money and work out change later on.
- Provisional assessment information for Year 2 for 2017 shows a dip in attainment particularly in reading. You knew that this was likely, as the year group had low starting points and there is a high proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. You have already devised actions to improve attainment next year such as revising your approach to teaching guided reading. You have also introduced a system known as 'reciprocal reading'. This involves having a consistently structured approach to tackling a text so that pupils have the tools they need to understand what they are reading.
- Another focus concerned how well pupils, especially boys, progress in reading in key stage 2 and how well they achieve in English grammar, spelling and punctuation by the end of Year 6. The school's own assessment information shows that pupils typically make good progress in reading. Workbooks also show pupils developing more detailed and deeper responses to reading comprehension questions, including expressing opinions about the reasons for characters' actions. Unvalidated assessment information for Year 6 for 2017 shows a marked improvement compared to 2016 in the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard or better in English grammar, spelling and punctuation. This figure is now above the national average.
- Provisional assessment information for Year 6 for 2017 indicates that attainment in reading is some way below the national average, although it is slightly better than attainment in 2016. You were aware that this was likely because the year group had low starting points at key stage 1 and there is a high number of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, including social and emotional needs. You have already put strategies in place to address this matter. For example, you have arranged that the current class teacher in Year 5 will move up to Year 6 with her class next year to continue their current good achievement.
- My last focus was on governance and attendance. Governors know the school well and they challenge leaders strongly, holding them to account effectively. Leaders understand their responsibilities well, but you recognise that the school's website has some omissions, mainly connected with information about the curriculum and some information about governors. You have undertaken to put these right.
- You have put effective strategies in place to reduce pupils' absences, such as the awarding of vouchers for high attendance. During your time as headteacher, attendance has improved overall so that it is now close to the national average. More recently, you have reduced persistent absence for disadvantaged pupils so

it is no longer in the highest 10% nationally. However, you acknowledge that there is more work to be done to try to reduce absence for this group of pupils even further.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they carry out their recently devised actions to improve achievement in reading by the end of Year 2 and Year 6
- they work to reduce absences further, especially for disadvantaged pupils
- when they analyse pupils' work, they include precise evaluations of the progress pupils make by referring to the knowledge, understanding and skills they expect them to have
- they provide more opportunities in the early years environment for children to develop their mathematical skills further
- they ensure that the school's website is compliant and keep a check on it to make sure it remains so.

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

Yours sincerely

Mark Quinn
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I carried out short visits to the early years and to classes in key stage 1 and key stage 2, which were joint activities with you. I scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation summary, action plans for school improvement, records of incidents of bullying and misbehaviour, minutes of meetings of the governing body and records connected with the safeguarding of children. I held discussions with senior leaders, other members of staff, governors and pupils. I had a discussion with a representative from the local authority. I analysed pupils' work and the school's own assessment information. I evaluated five responses received through Parent View, Ofsted's online survey. In addition, I analysed 14 responses to the staff questionnaire and 17 responses to the pupil questionnaire.