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Miss Samantha Clarke
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Dear Miss Clarke

Short inspection of St Chad's CofE (C) Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 15 March 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 March 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 lead the school with passion and determination to improve outcomes for all pupils. As a result, you have built a unified leadership team, whose members share a collective responsibility for school improvement. Pupils thrive in the nurturing environment, which enables them to make good progress.

Your school self-evaluation is accurate and honest and clearly shows the areas that leaders feel need to be improved. Comprehensive school improvement plans are in place, and these form a secure baseline for whole-school improvement.

The foundations laid in the early years prepare the youngest children to transfer to Year 1 with ease. Adults provide a rich and stimulating environment and plan interesting and engaging activities through which children are actively encouraged to explore, imagine, play and learn together. For example, during the inspection, the children were engaged in several exciting activities linked to the story of 'Jack and the beanstalk'. As we entered the room, they were so excited and could not wait to tell us both about the beanstalk that had appeared over night from the seed they had planted. They confidently talked to me about the story of Jack and the beanstalk and proudly showed me their writing linked to retelling the story. The early years team knows the children exceptionally well and has high expectations of what the children can do. The team members work seamlessly together to ensure that children's individual needs are met. The learning journeys we looked at demonstrate that the children's progress is systematically checked and recorded. These journeys show that the children are making fast rates of progress from their starting points.

The teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they represent) is a key strength of the school. Pupils develop a good phonic knowledge through the early years and key stage 1. Consequently, the number of pupils reaching the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check has been above the national average for the past three years. Pupils enjoy reading, and the pupils heard reading during the inspection were confident and keen to talk about a wide range of books they have read.

You and your team have taken action to address the areas for improvement from the previous inspection. At the last inspection, you were asked to improve pupils' outcomes in reading. Effective action has been taken, and reading has improved across the school. More pupils now reach the expected standard at the end of key stages 1 and 2. Although the proportion of pupils achieving the high standard at the end of key stage 1 is in line with the national picture, not enough pupils are achieving the high standard at the end of key stage 2. You recognise that there is work to do to ensure that more pupils across the school are working at the higher standard in reading, writing and mathematics.

You monitor the quality of teaching and learning well. The systems you have in place for tracking pupils' progress are clear and effective. These systems are used to support teachers when setting targets for improvement. As a result, teachers are encouraged to take ownership of the progress that pupils make, which in turn makes them continually reflect on their own practice. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and match tasks well to meet the needs of the pupils. However, during our learning walk, some pupils found difficulty in explaining how they had improved their work since the start of the year. This was because teachers do not yet use questioning well enough to challenge pupils to self-reflect on their own learning. Therefore, they do not fully understand the progress they have made or the next steps they need to take in their learning.

Governors bring a wealth of experience to the school team and have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They have carried out a skills audit of the governing body, and this has ensured that newly appointed governors bring the right skills to the team. You have ensured that new governors have received appropriate training and, as a result, they have already started to have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development.

The behaviour I observed in class and around the school is a strength of the school. Pupils enjoy their lessons, are polite and eager to learn. The pupils I spoke to confirmed that this is typically the case. Pupils were confident to talk to me about their work and were polite, respectful and confident.

Safeguarding is effective.

You place safeguarding as the highest priority for the school, which ensures that pupils' needs are met well. This is a caring school. Teachers help pupils to understand the risks of unsafe behaviour. Consequently, pupils feel happy and safe in school and know how to keep themselves safe from harm, for example, when using the internet.

Governors are well aware of their safeguarding responsibilities and regularly check that

safeguarding procedures are fit for purpose. The checks undertaken on staff, visitors and recruitment are stringent.

The school's policies to ensure that pupils are well protected are in place. Safeguarding case files are well maintained and regularly updated, showing the contact with parents and carers, pupils and outside agencies. These clear records support your work to safeguard pupils effectively.

You make sure that staff have regular training and updates about child protection and safeguarding matters. As a result, staff know what to do to keep pupils safe and to whom they should refer any concerns they may have.

Inspection findings

- Although the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard at the end of Year 6 is broadly in line with the national picture, outcomes in mathematics have been declining at the end of key stage 2 for the past two years. Current school data indicates that attainment and progress in mathematics are now improving. This is because, as leaders, you carried out a review of the teaching of mathematics and correctly identified that teachers were not allowing pupils to deepen their learning through applying their mathematical skills in problem solving. As a result of this, you trained all staff on how to teach this aspect of mathematics. Books seen during the visit demonstrated that teachers are now more confident at providing pupils with the opportunities to deepen their problem-solving skills. You also agreed that there is now a need to move this on further and encourage pupils to explain and justify their answers.
- Progress in writing was below average at the end of Year 6 in 2017. You reviewed writing across the school and implemented some key changes to this area of the curriculum. All pupils across key stages 1 and 2 now redraft their work. This helps them to focus on the use of language, spelling and punctuation. The school's own assessment system and the books we looked at demonstrated that current pupils are making strong progress.
- Your inclusion leaders have been highly effective in tracking the progress that pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are making. They identify those pupils who are in need of some additional support or focused interventions. Support staff have received good-quality training and, as a result, the interventions and support provided for pupils are of a high quality. The impact of this could be seen in the rapid progress these pupils are making.
- Another line of enquiry was focused on the attainment gap between the boys and girls in key stage 1. This was left as an area for the school to work on from the last inspection. You have carefully tracked boys' and girls' attainment and progress across key stage 1, and there are no longer any gaps between the attainment of boys and girls. We looked at those pupils who were in Year 2 at the last inspection as they are now in Year 6. Current school data indicates that this gap has closed across key stage 2.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- a greater proportion of pupils reach the higher standards at the end of key stage 2
- pupils are able to justify and explain their thinking in mathematical lessons when solving problems
- adults use questioning more effectively in lessons to encourage pupils to self-reflect on their learning
- pupils are given the opportunity to set their own targets and next steps.

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

Yours sincerely

Kerry Rochester
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this short inspection, I met with you and members of your leadership team. You and I observed teaching and learning across key stages 1 and 2 and in the early years. Together, with other leaders, we looked at work in pupils' books. I spoke to pupils around school and in lessons and listened to some Year 2 and Year 6 pupils read. We also considered the school's own assessment information about pupils' progress. I spoke to four governors and considered information about their work in the school. I conducted a detailed review of safeguarding during which a range of documentation was considered.