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Mrs Mary Pike
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Pike

Short inspection of Christ Church CofE Primary School (Purley)

Following my visit to the school on 8 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 November 2011.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You insist on high expectations for all pupils, whatever potential barriers to learning may exist, and you communicate these ambitions clearly. Pupils, parents and staff appreciate the school's inclusive culture, which nurtures the talents of staff and prepares pupils well for their future lives.

Your plans for improvement focus sharply on what matters most and demonstrate that you and other leaders are skilled in using information from a range of sources to decide on priorities. Your governors are rightly proud that you have sustained the school's good standards through a period of unexpected senior staff absence and the extensive building programme, now nearing completion.

You have tackled the areas identified for improvement at the last inspection effectively. Pupils understand what is expected of them because teachers explain clearly what is good about their work and how to improve it. Pupils I spoke with appreciate the skill with which teachers explain new learning. Younger pupils are provided with well-considered activities to help them strengthen their physical ability to write. Middle leaders are playing a more prominent role in driving improvement, though they do not always focus sharply enough on pupils' progress when giving teachers advice on how to improve. Pupils understand the next things they need to do to make progress in their learning.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose, and records are detailed and of high quality. When checks on the suitability of staff raise questions, you take thorough steps to assess risks. School leaders and governors keep up with current guidance, ensuring that the school's safeguarding policy is updated and that members of staff are given the opportunity to understand the latest advice. You provide well-considered training to improve the skills of members of staff in identifying pupils potentially at risk of particular forms of abuse, such as female genital mutilation.

You use information from published serious case reviews which may be relevant to the school, and discuss these reflectively to see how they may improve your practice. Governors and leaders have been effective in ensuring that safety and security have been maintained while the premises are being redeveloped to accommodate the school's expansion.

Pupils and parents typically express confidence in your work to keep pupils safe. Staff who took part in the inspection survey share this positive view. You review the curriculum regularly to make sure that it supports pupils' development of safety awareness. For example, older pupils are provided with training to help them stay safe when using public transport. Pupils can explain confidently how to protect their identity when using the internet.

Inspection findings

- A focus for this inspection was on the progress of current pupils in writing in key stage 2. You noticed that their progress in writing was not as strong as in reading in 2016, and have decided to make this a key priority in your current plans for improvement.
- Pupils' books and the school's progress tracking records demonstrate that pupils from all starting points now make good progress in writing. Pupils' work reflects the strong emphasis teachers place on developing skills in grammar and punctuation. Teachers make sure pupils have interesting reasons to write. Pupils told me how their work has improved in the current year and what they need to do next to improve further. The most able pupils I spoke to, including disadvantaged pupils, could explain very specifically how their writing has improved. For example, older pupils could explain how they are now using more effective emotive language to improve the style of their creative writing.
- Less-able pupils also understand how teachers are helping them improve their writing. However, typically, they find it more difficult to sustain the use of new skills when writing at length. Books I looked at during the inspection demonstrate that this continues to limit the progress of some less-able pupils.
- Middle leaders' checks on the quality of the teaching of writing I scrutinised indicate that they focus sharply on checking teachers' compliance with agreed policies. However, these checks do not take enough account of how effective teaching is on sustaining the progress of groups of pupils of different abilities.

- During the inspection we also considered the progress of boys in key stage 1 in mathematics. Boys enjoy the opportunity to learn a broad range of mathematical themes and topics. You have introduced more challenging topics such as fractions earlier to challenge pupils further and ensure that the curriculum is covered well. Teachers intervene promptly to give effective support to pupils who need more help in learning new calculation methods. The most able boys are challenged to move on to more challenging calculations promptly, when teachers notice they are ready. However, teachers are typically less effective at ensuring that the most able can apply their skills and explain their thinking.
- The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in phonics by the end of Year 1 has varied over recent years. You have made a concerted effort to improve the quality of the teaching of phonics in key stage 1. As a result, the proportion of current pupils on track to reach the expected standard is in line with national averages for the second year running.
- Pupils who read to me were confident in using their phonics skills to tackle unfamiliar words. For instance, pupils are able to use these skills to pronounce unfamiliar proper nouns in stories they are reading. Teachers help pupils to select appropriate books to allow them to make progress. The most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, demonstrate sophisticated skills in interpreting the books they are reading, making skilful reference to evidence from the text and explaining the actions of the main characters in a story.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- less-able pupils in key stage 2 develop the ability to sustain their use of writing skills consistently when writing at length
- teachers challenge the most able pupils in key stage 1 in mathematics even more effectively to deepen their understanding and apply their skills
- when checking the impact of teaching, middle leaders focus more sharply on the progress pupils make from different starting points.

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

Yours sincerely

Andrew Wright
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I held discussions with senior and middle leaders about their school improvement work and safeguarding arrangements. I met with representatives of the governing body. I visited classes in all key stages with senior leaders. I heard pupils reading, looked at some of their written work and talked with them about their views of the school. I looked at leaders' written records of their checks on the quality of teaching. I also scrutinised documents related to safeguarding and the school's self-evaluation. Responses to the online Parent View survey were taken into account, including a number of written responses from parents. Outcomes of the electronic staff survey provided by Ofsted during the inspection were also considered. I spoke to parents who requested a discussion with me during the inspection.