

13 February 2018

Mrs Jane Marson
Headteacher
Christopher Pickering Primary School
The Compass
1 Burnham Road
Hull
HU4 7EB

Dear Mrs Marson

Short inspection of Christopher Pickering Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 23 January 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 your school was judged to be good in June 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. As headteacher, you are a highly effective and inspirational leader. You have secured some significant improvements since the last inspection, especially in reading.

You and your leadership team continually monitor and evaluate standards across the school. This is allowing you and other leaders to evaluate the school's strengths and areas for improvement objectively. As a result, you have a clear blueprint to make the school even better. You reflect on the findings, and act quickly to deal with any emerging concerns, helping the school to evolve and improve further. Commendably, you have accomplished this while developing staff and keeping morale high during a period of staffing turbulence.

The staff survey responses were universally positive and they reflect the complete confidence that staff have in your leadership. Your mentoring and coaching programme for new leaders is helping them to become established quickly in their roles.

You have created a culture where all staff are passionate that Christopher Pickering Primary School remains an inclusive, accepting and community-minded school. I noticed immediately the school's warm, friendly and inviting feel. Your decision to share the building with a special school and a hearing-impaired hub helps to illustrate the determination of staff to meet the wide

range of needs of local families. Parents appreciate this and are extremely positive about the school. Of the 23 responses to the Ofsted questionnaire, Parent View, all parents said that they would recommend the school. Typically, they acknowledged that this is a 'fantastic school with great teachers' where 'my child skips to school in the morning and can't wait to be there'.

Governance is a strength of the school. The governing body is well led, and governors provide challenge and support in equal measure. Governors are ambitious for the success of each pupil. They visit school regularly, gathering evidence to inform their understanding of the school's strengths and the improvements that are taking place. Governors use information effectively to challenge, as well as to commend, leaders on the quality of education provided.

Pupils behave extremely well, both in class and around the school at break and lunchtimes. Pupils are respectful and courteous and supportive of the learning of others. They talk enthusiastically about tasks in class and share ideas to support each other's understanding. Pupils respond well to most teachers' high expectations. You have ensured that pupils have a range of opportunities to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding through the immersive and exciting learning areas in school. These allow pupils to explore and develop a strong understanding of the curriculum in a creative way and build excellent language skills.

Pupils are very confident and welcoming. I had several conversations with pupils of all ages who were interested in me as a visitor and wanted to tell me how proud they are of their school. They were eager to share the great things they did, including all of the creative work connected to the City of Culture, as well as all their sporting activities. One pupil said, 'Everybody gets a chance to do the things they like and find things they didn't know they could do.'

You correctly judge reading to be a strength. Pupils make rapid progress in reading. As a result, by the end of Year 6 in 2017 standards in reading were much higher than average. The most able pupils did very well in reading. However, you acknowledge that in 2017, from their different starting points, pupils in Year 6 did not do as well in writing and mathematics. There are early signs that the interventions you have put in place to address this are helping to raise standards and speed up current pupils' progress in writing and mathematics. Even so, you acknowledge that there is still further work needed to ensure that the most able pupils are continually challenged. This is so that a higher proportion achieve the high levels of attainment they are capable of by the end of Year 6, especially in mathematics.

Following a period of turbulence and staffing changes, we agreed that the quality of teaching is strengthening. However, some teachers would benefit from additional training and support to improve their practice so that the quality of teaching continually improves across the school. In September 2017, your collaboration with local schools was formalised within the Humber

Education Trust. This has allowed you to benefit from and share good practice in teaching and learning across the partnership. It has resulted in your staff joining neighbouring schools to jointly assess pupils' work and strengthen their own practice.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. All of the checks and procedures meet statutory requirements. Child protection training is fully up to date for staff and governors, and you make sure that the training schedule is timely and well managed. The safeguarding team, which includes the pastoral and attendance leader, is thorough in all areas of safeguarding. They are very experienced in dealing with any safeguarding issues swiftly and effectively.

All staff are very clear about the procedures they must follow, particularly for raising child protection concerns about pupils. Your records show that you work effectively with parents and carers and outside agencies and thoroughly follow up any such concerns. For example, the work you and other staff complete around children missing from education is exemplary.

Pupils, staff and parents agree that the school is a safe and happy place. Pupils say that bullying is not a problem. They praise the friendly and welcoming family atmosphere as part of their daily experience. They understand the behaviour system, and they say that the system is fair. They also know that on rare occasions when misbehaviour occurs, you will deal with it 'very calmly'. Pupils were keen to share how they are rewarded for good behaviour, attendance and punctuality. They love the reward of 'Flapjack Friday', understanding how important it is to be in school. As a result, the attendance for all groups of pupils has rapidly improved and is now at national averages. You have also worked hard with those families who find it hard to get their children into school and because of this, the proportion of pupils that were regularly absent has reduced dramatically.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection, I looked at the quality of teaching of phonics, especially for younger pupils. This is because in 2017 outcomes in the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1 dipped to below average.
- Inspection evidence confirms that the teaching of phonics is strong across the school. Children in the early years are making good progress in learning to read. They are encouraged to try out different words, such as referring to baby bear's 'stomach' being full of porridge rather than 'tummy'.
- Throughout key stages 1 and 2, pupils use their knowledge to link letters and sounds increasingly effectively. This enables them to read and understand the meanings of words. Older pupils use this knowledge to help them spell unfamiliar words. This, in turn, is helping pupils to improve their writing.

- By the end of Year 6, in 2017, pupils made much better progress from their starting points in reading than they did in writing and mathematics. This is reflected in the much higher proportion of pupils reaching a higher level of attainment in reading. Therefore, during the inspection, I looked at how well current pupils are achieving in writing and mathematics at key stage 2, and in particular how well the most able pupils were being challenged.
- You told me that actions to address both of these issues are already well under way. You have provided high-quality staff training both in school and across the trust to improve the quality of teaching in writing and mathematics. We saw this when pupils were planning their writing about being in an ancient Egyptian tomb. The most able pupils were developing more-complex plots and using good vocabulary to create atmosphere. As a result, their plans were exciting and relevant. However we did agree that there were fewer opportunities for all pupils to use and apply their mathematical skills when completing work in other subjects across the curriculum.
- Staff are consistent in the way that they teach writing. Effective teaching practice is shared. As a result of this, the teaching of how to write for different purposes is clear and systematic. Current pupils' writing in their books is vibrant and interesting.
- In most classes, pupils apply their writing skills well in their work in a variety of subjects, such as in science. Pupils are confident about how to edit and improve their writing over time.
- The progress of the most able pupils in writing, however, is still, at times, hampered because some work lacks challenge. We agreed that further work is needed to improve this aspect of the school's work.
- In mathematics, teaching is also improving. Pupils' mathematics books show, for example, that pupils are being provided with appropriate opportunities to practise their mathematical reasoning and problem-solving skills. This is helping more pupils to reach higher levels of attainment.
- During the inspection, in Year 6 mathematics for example, the most able pupils were being challenged effectively to extend their thinking about fractions and decimals. Even so, you agreed that across the school there remains scope to challenge the most able pupils further in mathematics and pupils need further opportunities to use their mathematical skills, such as when they complete work in other subject areas.
- Subject leaders relish the responsibility of leading their respective areas. They routinely check the quality of teaching and provide support to staff. As a result, staff are held to account increasingly well for the progress that pupils make. Staff appreciate this support and challenge, saying that it is helping them to reflect on and improve their practice. We agreed that it is important that these leaders, some of whom are fairly new to their roles, continue to work with staff to ensure that teaching practices across the school continue to improve.

- During the inspection, we looked at pupils' attendance. This is because, in the past, attendance has been below the national average.
- You have been relentless in your work to improve attendance and this has paid off. Your pastoral leader monitors attendance closely and because of this works closely with pupils and their families effectively. Effective systems are in place to make sure that pupils attend school regularly and on time.
- A number of creative incentives, including rewards and certificates, have been positively welcomed by pupils. As a result, attendance is now consistently in line with the national average. The number of pupils who are persistently absent has significantly reduced.
- As a school you have a much higher than average proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with an education, health and care plan. We agreed, therefore, to look at how well these pupils were achieving.
- Inspection evidence confirms that, from their individual starting points, these pupils make good progress. Many reach the expected standard for other pupils. Additional support programmes are effective in making sure that pupils make good progress. Provision is closely and effectively monitored by the special educational needs coordinator. As a result, you and other leaders ensure that a bespoke programme of training, advice and support for staff is provided. This, in turn, ensures that individual pupils receive the support that they need.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- challenge for the most able pupils is routine, particularly in writing and mathematics, so that the proportion of pupils that reach the higher levels of attainment by the end of Year 6 improves
- pupils are given even more opportunities to use and apply their mathematical reasoning and problem-solving skills when they undertake work across other subject areas
- leaders, including subject leaders, continue to check and take action to ensure that the quality of teaching continually improves across the school.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and chief executive officer of the Humber Educational Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for the City of Kingston-upon-Hull. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Jen Cave
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, your senior and middle leaders, a group of teachers, and four governors. I met with the two chief executives of the Humber Education Trust. I spoke with pupils informally, in classrooms and when walking around the school. I also met formally with a group of pupils from across key stages 1 and 2. I visited a range of classrooms, including in the early years provision and key stages 1 and 2, many with you and your senior leaders. I looked at work in pupils' books with your English and mathematics leaders. I examined policies and procedures for the safeguarding of pupils, along with the school's record of checks carried out on staff working at the school. I reviewed and discussed a range of other documents, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan, documents relating to pupils' achievement, information on attendance, minutes of governing body meetings, performance management and the monitoring of teaching and learning. I also looked at the school's website. I considered the views of the 23 parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and analysed the 21 staff views expressed via the staff questionnaire. There were no pupil responses to the online questionnaire.