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4 June 2017

Mr Stephen Smith
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Smith

Short inspection of Chapel End Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 21 June 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 October 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 provide strong leadership and have a crystal-clear vision for pupils to become confident and successful learners. The school's motto, 'I do my best', underpins all that you do. You have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Staff and pupils share your high expectations. You have developed a strong sense of teamwork for the common good. Staff support each other and share best practice to improve teaching and learning. Pupils are challenged and supported to make good progress from their starting points. They are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

The school is a warm and friendly place. Pupils love learning here. I saw lots of lovely displays of artwork and extended writing. Pupils are polite, welcoming and respectful. They behave very well and work hard in lessons. One pupil commented, 'Everybody is kind and friendly and teachers help us to learn.' Pupils take pride in their work and many pupils were keen to discuss their work with me. They participate in a wide range of extra-curricular activities such as art, choir, sport and residential trips. The pupils I spoke with have high aspirations and are keen to go to university.

All the parents I spoke to, and the majority of those who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, were positive about the school. One parent commented, 'Staff are approachable and the school has a family feel.'

You have addressed the areas for improvement successfully which were identified at the last inspection. You have provided training and guidance for middle leaders. As a result, they have become more involved in monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching across the school. Middle leaders ensure that assessment is accurate by regular sampling of pupils' work. Teachers track pupils' progress and use assessment information to plan interesting and challenging lessons. Governors are committed to ongoing improvement and provide support and challenge for leaders. They visit the school regularly to observe teaching alongside leaders and discuss pupils' progress. Governors know the school's strengths and areas for development. One governor commented, 'The school is a happy community and the children and staff work well together.' Governors are making themselves increasingly available to parents, for example by attending school concerts and rewards assemblies.

Children in the early years make good progress. The proportion achieving a good level of development has been above the national average for the last three years. Disadvantaged children are making faster progress than in 2016, and as a result, more are reaching a good level of development. In 2016, the proportion of pupils achieving the Year 1 phonics screening check was above average.

The proportion of pupils who met the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 was also above average. You recognise that the number of middle-ability pupils reaching the higher standards at key stage 1 in 2016 should have been higher in reading, writing and mathematics. You have introduced a number of initiatives to address this and outcomes for this group are now improving.

In 2016, at the end of key stage 2, all pupils made at least expected progress in reading. Progress in writing and mathematics was significantly above the national average. Over time, progress in reading at key stage 2 has not been as rapid as progress in writing and mathematics. You have taken steps to rectify this and there is already evidence of improvement. You acknowledge the need to improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Records are detailed and of high quality. Induction procedures reflect the high priority given to keeping children safe. Staff are appropriately trained and have a clear understanding of what to do if they have concerns about the safety of any pupil. Staff receive regular updates throughout the year. A designated governor is responsible for health and safety and reports regularly to all governors about any issues that require attention.

Pupils say that they feel safe and well looked after in school. They report that bullying is rare and that staff act quickly to resolve any issues. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe when using the internet. The overwhelming majority of parents who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, were very positive about the school's work to keep their children safe.

Inspection findings

- You recognised that pupils did not make rapid enough progress in reading at the end of key stage 2 last year. You have introduced a range of initiatives to improve pupils' progress. Guided reading programmes are developing pupils' vocabulary and comprehension skills. You and your team have provided more 'boy-friendly' texts to engage boys in their learning. You encourage reading by giving out awards and organising author visits. Current assessment information shows that progress in reading is improving. However, you acknowledge that this remains an area for further development.
- A small proportion of middle-ability pupils did not perform as well as their peers nationally at the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 1 in 2016. You identified this and implemented a number of strategies to improve this group's progress. Pupils say that they enjoy reading and read regularly in school. Pupils who read to me were able to apply reading techniques such as sounding out unfamiliar words. Real-world contexts such as 'extinction' act as 'hooks' to capture pupils' imagination and provide them with the opportunity to write for a purpose. There is a strong emphasis on developing pupils' vocabulary and spelling through extended writing. You have introduced a whole-school focus on reasoning in mathematics, which is bearing fruit. Pupils enjoy their mathematics lessons and the work that they are set makes them think hard. My review of your data, scrutiny of pupils' work and discussions with pupils indicate that they are making good progress.
- In 2016, disadvantaged pupils did not make enough progress in mathematics at the end of key stages 1 and 2. You know the barriers to learning that this group of children sometimes face and make good use of the additional funding provided by the pupil premium. Inspection evidence shows that these pupils are now catching up. Teachers hold regular meetings to track pupils' progress and organise extra support for those pupils who may have fallen behind. Teaching assistants help those pupils with specific learning difficulties to accelerate their learning.
- The attendance of all pupils was below average in 2016. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent from school was above average. You have taken action to improve attendance. For example, leaders follow up pupil absences with parents and carers tenaciously. Leaders know individual pupils and families well and work closely with them, engaging the support of the education welfare officer. Regular attendance is celebrated through rewards. The pupil premium funding supports eligible pupils to attend breakfast club. The impact of these initiatives is that attendance is now above the national average. In addition, there has been a reduction in the number of pupils that are persistently absent. However, you recognise that the attendance of some disadvantaged pupils needs to improve further.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- continue to improve the standards that pupils reach in reading
- further reduce the overall absence of disadvantaged pupils.

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

Yours sincerely

Ahmed Marikar
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this short inspection I met with you, the deputy headteacher and a group of middle leaders. I met with four members of the governing body, including the chair of the governing body. I also held a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority. I met with eight pupils from key stage 2 and spoke to others during breaktimes. I visited a number of classes, where I observed teaching and learning, looked at pupils' work and spoke to pupils. I also heard pupils from Year 2 and Year 6 read. I carried out a work scrutiny of pupils' work across the school. I spoke with parents as they dropped their children off at school. I took account of 40 responses to Parent View, the Ofsted online questionnaire, including 28 free-text responses. I also considered the views of nine staff and 12 pupils through Ofsted's online questionnaires. I looked at a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and information about pupils' attainment and progress. I also evaluated safeguarding procedures, including: policies to keep children safe; records of training; safeguarding checks; and attendance and behaviour information. I also undertook a review of the school's website.