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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



13 July 2018

Mrs Sharon Williams
Headteacher
Newnham Croft Primary School
Chedworth Street
Cambridge
Cambridgeshire
CB3 9JF

Dear Mrs Williams

Short inspection of Newnham Croft Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 3 July 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 June 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 and your leadership team have an accurate knowledge of the school's strengths and the areas that need improvement. Together, you and your leaders have taken effective action to ensure that the school has gone from strength to strength. Your accurate self-evaluation is building the school's capacity for further improvement.

You and your leaders have continued to inspire pupils by ensuring your curriculum is engaging and well taught. You make effective use of the diverse experiences of pupils from around the world to learn from and about one another, creating a harmonious school community. Pupils who are new to the school, often speaking English as an additional language, are warmly welcomed. This ensures that they thrive and make good progress. As one parent commented on Parent View, the Ofsted online questionnaire, 'The ethos of the school encourages a love of learning and creates a cohesive, international community.' This was one view typical of others.

You place a strong emphasis on pupils taking risks in learning to improve their outcomes, both socially and academically. Teachers plan topics that make full use of the outdoors and develop pupils' awareness of environmental issues. At the heart of pupils' learning is the Newnham code: 'be kind, be respectful, be a thinker, never give up'. The pupils I talked to were positive about the challenges presented by their work. Mistakes are welcome and seen as an opportunity to build confidence and resilience. This approach

makes an effective contribution to developing well-rounded individuals who are ready for the next stage in their learning and development.

Staff are proud to work at Newnham Croft. They are committed to helping pupils do well. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school and words such as 'inspire', 'flourish' and 'thrive' summed up many of the sentiments expressed on Parent View.

Governors use their detailed information to offer you and your leaders good support. Governors are committed and ambitious for the school's success. They have a very clear understanding of the school's priorities for improvement. They work strategically to focus their monitoring activities. Governors check that they have the skills and knowledge to carry out their roles effectively by evaluating their own impact. They provide effective challenge to hold leaders to account for ensuring that the school improves.

The previous inspection asked leaders to raise achievement in writing. Standards have risen. The proportion of pupils working at the expected standards at both key stage 1 and key stage 2 improved between 2016 and 2017. In the 2017 national assessments, the proportions of pupils who attained the greater depth were above the national average. However, the progress of middle-attaining pupils was lower when compared to other groups of pupils. This formed one of the areas of focus for this inspection and is expanded upon in the 'Inspection findings' section of this letter. I found the work undertaken by leaders is improving pupils' progress in writing.

A second area you were asked to improve was to ensure that pupils' achievement was monitored in subjects other than English, mathematics and science. You introduced a systematic approach and provided training for the staff. Subject leaders make effective use of this whole-school strategy. They have a secure knowledge of pupils' progress because they understand how to collate information and evaluate their assessments. Consequently, pupils are making significant gains in subjects across the curriculum.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors have ensured that arrangements for safeguarding are fit for purpose. Staff receive appropriate training so they understand how to keep pupils safe. You provide regular updates to keep staff informed and ensure that there is a high vigilance of safeguarding. Records are well maintained and identify actions taken to address concerns. The governor with responsibility for safeguarding makes regular checks of the procedures regarding the suitability of staff to work with children.

Pupils understand about keeping themselves safe and your staff teach pupils to keep themselves safe when online. You provide parents with useful information about the dangers of the internet. Pupils said that they feel safe in school. They are confident that adults will do all that they can to ensure their welfare and well-being. Parents agree that their children are safe at school and well cared for.

Inspection findings

- For my first line of enquiry, I wanted to find out how leaders were checking the progress of middle-attaining pupils. This was because in 2017 the proportion of pupils attaining the expected standard in writing and mathematics at key stage 2 was below the national average. You have identified this as a priority in your development plan. Your assessment system has been refined so you are able to ask questions about pupils' progress from their starting points. The information is discussed with teachers and clear actions agreed to help pupils achieve their targets. Evidence from inspection and your own school information shows that more middle-attaining pupils are now working at expected standards for their age across English and mathematics. However, you have identified that this group of pupils need greater challenge so that they are given the opportunity to attain the highest standards.
- During the inspection, I spoke to a group of middle-attaining pupils and looked at their workbooks. Pupils told me that they enjoyed the opportunity to select their own levels of challenge. They identified pieces of work where they were able to talk about the skills they had used to complete the task successfully. For example, one pupil spoke confidently about being a better reporter of news events because he had learned to ask pertinent questions, use time connectives and write in the past tense.
- My second line of enquiry focused upon the impact of leaders' work to improve pupils' progress in writing. This was because in the 2017 national assessments, progress between key stage 1 and key stage 2 was average in writing but it was not as high as that in other subjects. Children in the early years make a good start with their writing. When we visited lessons, they confidently spoke about their ideas for their imaginative piece of writing. Children formed letters correctly and many recognised when to use full stops. Writing books showed children making good progress and being well prepared for Year 1.
- In key stage 1, pupils quickly learn how to use a range of descriptive language. Teachers select purposeful activities that often link to a first-hand experience or shared class texts. Pupils are encouraged to be ambitious with the words they use. For example, one pupil, typical of others, wrote a letter to the Queen about a special wedding tea. She described having tea on 'delicate china plates' and serving 'scrumptious scones'. Work in pupils' books across a range of subjects shows that pupils make good progress in their writing skills.
- Leaders have ensured that teaching provides frequent opportunities for pupils to practise different types of writing, both in English and in other subjects. Teachers check that pupils understand the key features of a particular style of writing before using these features in their work. For example, work in pupils' science books shows how formal writing skills are improving through the recording of investigations and experiments.
- Your teachers use different curriculum experiences to provide pupils with a rich knowledge of language. Pupils discuss and share their ideas for writing. Teachers provide different models to help pupils structure their writing. For example, in one class, pupils successfully used a range of sentence openers to portray the sense of misery and fear after the loss of the Titanic. Evidence from pupils' writing in workbooks across different subjects and your own school assessments show that

pupils are making strong progress. However, at times, work in pupils' books is untidy because teachers do not have consistent expectations of pupils' handwriting.

- Your leaders have identified that spelling is inconsistent. Teachers are regularly addressing pupils' misconceptions and pupils practise the correct spelling, when they have misspelled a word, to help them to remember. Pupils' books show that they are using editing skills to check for errors and improve the quality of their written work. However, these approaches need to embed to improve spelling further, especially for middle-attaining pupils.
- A third line of enquiry involved exploring the effectiveness of subject leaders. Subject leaders play a significant part in the good provision within the school and contribute to whole-school improvement. Subject leaders have an accurate understanding of the quality of teaching. This is because they use a range of information to check the standard of work produced by the pupils. They visit classrooms to watch the teaching and look at pupils' books to ensure the work they are given is challenging. Teachers' assessments are moderated and provide leaders with an informed understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in their areas of responsibility. Leaders use their skills to deliver support and training to improve teachers' practice across the school. As a result, pupils make good progress across a range of subjects.
- My final line of enquiry involved looking at how leaders' actions ensure that pupils attend school regularly. In 2017, the published information shows that attendance was below the national average. The proportion of persistent absences was above the average. Leaders acted quickly to establish procedures for checking attendance. Attendance is closely monitored and leaders follow up pupils' absence swiftly. Leaders communicate their expectations and inform parents of the importance of their children attending school regularly through newsletters. You challenge and help families to improve their children's attendance with the support of an early help worker. As a result of your actions, attendance is now improving and fewer numbers of pupils are persistently absent.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the proportion of middle-attaining pupils who achieve the higher standards increases to be in line with the national average
- teachers have higher expectations of pupils' handwriting and spelling.

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

Yours sincerely

Steve Mellors
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you, your deputy headteacher, English leaders and other subject leaders. I met with your office manager and yourself to discuss attendance. I met with four governors, including the chair of the governing body. I spoke to a representative of the local authority. I met with eight pupils and spoke informally with other pupils during lessons. I visited classes with you, where I observed teaching and learning and looked at pupils' work. I carried out a book scrutiny of pupils' books from a range of different subjects.

I took account of 56 free-text responses to Parent View, the Ofsted online questionnaire. I also took into consideration 20 responses to the online staff questionnaire. I looked at a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and development plan. I evaluated safeguarding procedures, including policies to keep pupils safe, staff training records, safeguarding checks and attendance information. I undertook a review of the school's website.