

22 March 2018

Mr Adrian King
Headteacher
Lavant CofE Primary School
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Chichester
West Sussex
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Dear Mr King

Short inspection of Lavant CofE Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 13 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 November 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Together with the deputy headteacher, you have created a culture based on high expectations for what pupils can achieve and for how well they will behave. All staff, parents and carers and pupils fully endorse your ambition. One parent commented that you and the staff team are, 'supportive, passionate and genuinely committed to providing our children with the best education possible'.

Pupils have entirely positive attitudes to learning. They listen carefully, cooperate well and work hard. Staff help pupils to develop resilience so that they can overcome challenges in their learning. Pupils understand that determination coupled with hard work helps them to tackle things that they would otherwise not be able to achieve. Their excellent behaviour extends outside the classroom to the playground and other areas of the school. Older pupils seize the many opportunities for taking responsibility, including for caring for the youngest children in the school.

This is a very inclusive school, always striving to focus on the many strengths that all pupils have, so that all will have a positive view of themselves. This has a positive impact on their personal and social development.

Pupils learn well and make good progress, especially in mathematics and reading, because teachers plan lessons based on accurate assessments of pupils' learning. Leaders have ensured that staff have had the right training to provide them with a

greater depth of subject knowledge. Pupils say that teachers always have very high expectations for them. In 2017, all pupils achieved the expected standard in mathematics at the end of key stage 2 and the proportion of pupils achieving this standard in reading was well above the national average. Disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress. However, you acknowledge that pupils do not achieve as well in writing as in these other two subjects. Children get off to a good start in the early years, and most achieve a good level of development, so that they are ready to move into Year 1. However, leaders recognise that not enough children reach the higher standards by the end of their Reception Year.

Parents are wholly positive about the school. All agree that pupils are safe and happy – the overwhelming majority of parents would recommend the school. They particularly value the nurturing, caring, Christian ethos that permeates the school and the way that staff know all the pupils, take good care of them and help them to learn well. Many single out your leadership for special comment. One expressed this view when they said, 'Mr King provides exceptional leadership and his calm and positive attitude is felt throughout the school environment.'

Governors bring a wealth of skills and experience to their work. They know the school in detail because they use a range of sources of information when forming their view, including their own visits to the school. They provide the right balance of support and challenge for leaders, and share their high expectations and ambition.

You have successfully addressed the areas for improvement from the previous inspection. Teachers plan lessons with a clear and accurate assessment of what pupils have learned before. Staff check how well pupils are doing during lessons and adapt tasks or move pupils on when they are ready. Teachers manage the challenge of split-age classes skilfully and are well supported in this by well-trained teaching assistants.

Inspectors also asked you to develop the role of middle leaders to ensure they regularly check the impact of their work to improve the quality of teaching. Middle leaders now play an important role in driving improvements in the school, including in writing. They receive relevant, up-to-date training to undertake their roles effectively and have a clear view of the strengths and areas of improvement for their subjects.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have established a strong safeguarding culture in the school and all staff understand their responsibility to take care of pupils. Policies, procedures and protocols are all fit for purpose. You ensure that the right checks are made on people before they can work in the school. Staff are trained regularly and all have read the most recent guidance on how to keep pupils safe. Senior leaders keep staff up to date with any important new information about safeguarding matters. Governors understand their safeguarding responsibilities well and make regular checks to be confident that pupils in the school are safe.

Pupils feel completely safe in the school. They have total confidence in staff to look after them and deal with any problems as they arise. Pupils understand the many types of bullying, but say that it almost never happens. On the rare occasions that it does crop up, staff quickly nip it in the bud. You make sure that pupils understand how to stay safe in a range of situations, including online. Older pupils have a quite detailed appreciation of the risks they face when on the internet, including when using games consoles.

Inspection findings

- We agreed to follow four aspects of your school's work during my visit. The first was looking at how well pupils are achieving in writing, especially in key stage 2. You have altered the approach to how writing is taught so that it now sits at the heart of every topic pupils study. Teachers ensure that they plan engaging and meaningful writing challenges so that pupils not only enjoy writing, but make good progress as writers also. Pupils regularly write on their own at length and this, combined with effective teaching of grammar and punctuation, means that they achieve well.
- However, pupils' spelling mistakes hold them back from writing as well as they could, especially in key stage 2. You appreciate that there is still more to be done to improve spelling, and leaders have recently introduced a new approach to help pupils become better spellers. So far, there is no clear evidence that this new approach has had time to have a make a real difference to pupils' writing.
- The second aspect looked at how far teaching in key stage 1 builds on the strong start that pupils make in the early years. Staff have very high expectations of what pupils are capable of and are rigorous in helping them to achieve their best. Pupils understand and accept these high expectations. One explained that there are 'non-negotiables' for things such as spellings of basic words and presenting their work neatly. When asked about the meaning of 'non-negotiables', one boys said, 'That means there are no excuses.' Pupils currently in key stage 1 are making good progress, some from low starting points.
- Next, we looked at how ambitious leaders are for children to exceed the early learning goals by the end of their first year in school. The percentage of pupils that achieve a good level of development at the end of the early years is typically above that seen nationally. Although there was a dip last year, leaders have convincing evidence that this was related to the cohort of children, many of whom came in with skills well below those typical for their age.
- The early years classroom is well resourced and attractive so that it encourages children to become enthusiastic learners. Staff provide a wide range of activities to engage children's interest and draw them into learning, including writing. Work in children's books shows that children currently in school are making good progress and the great majority are on track to achieve a good level of development. This year, leaders are targeting more children to achieve these higher standards. However, more needs to be done so that staff are clear about

what children need to be able to do to achieve beyond the early learning goals, so that they can plan accordingly.

- Finally, we agreed to look at how well pupils achieve in the wider curriculum. The curriculum is a treasure trove of exciting and imaginative learning topics for pupils, enabling them to achieve well in a wide range of subjects. Teachers plan lessons that capture pupils' interest and spark their curiosity. As well as interesting lessons in school, pupils visit interesting places such as Tuppenny Barn and The Novium Museum in Chichester. Teachers plan visits with great thought so that learning can be linked to real life whenever possible. Recently, for example, Years 5 and 6 were studying coastal pathways and visited Chichester. In the morning, they visited the harbour to collect evidence about these pathways for themselves, before having a formal debate about the subject in the afternoon in the council chamber of Chichester County Hall. Pupils speak enthusiastically about the school's exciting curriculum and how well it helps them to learn.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils are supported to develop accurate spelling, especially in key stage 2, so that their attainment and progress in writing matches that in reading and mathematics
- staff in the early years have a thorough understanding of what children need to do to exceed the early learning goals, so that a great proportion of them achieve these higher standards.

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

Yours sincerely

Bruce Waelend
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I had meetings with you and the deputy headteacher, other leaders, five members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority. I spoke to a representative of the diocese on the telephone. You and I visited all classes in the school to observe teaching and learning. Together, we looked at pupils' work. I observed pupils' behaviour around the school, including during an assembly, and had a meeting with a group of 10 pupils. I considered 15 responses to the staff

survey, 46 responses to the pupil survey and 93 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 27 written responses. At the start of the day, I spoke to several parents. I evaluated a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation documents and development plans. I looked closely at the school's safeguarding policies, procedures and checks, and spoke with several members of staff to test out their understanding of these arrangements.