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28 May 2019

Mrs Sarah Shakles
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Shakles

Short inspection of Crabbs Cross Academy

Following my visit to the school on 8 May 2019, 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 July 2015.

This school continues to be good.

You and your leadership team, including governors, work very well together and have maintained the good quality of education since the last inspection. You ensure that pupils are warmly welcomed into a bright and vibrant learning environment in which they feel safe and secure and can excel. The school's motto, 'flying high, creating success together', underpins all aspects of the school's work. Leaders have high expectations for pupils, aiming for them to become the best they can be. Effective support is provided to staff at all levels so that they are well equipped to achieve this aim. The teachers who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire say that they feel valued, respected and supported. They enjoy working at the school.

Leaders, including governors, know the school well. They have established a robust system of monitoring the school's performance and use the information they gather very successfully. Leaders identify appropriate improvement priorities accurately and decisively, and carry out regular checks, including visiting classrooms and looking at pupils' work, to make sure that these improvements are being achieved. Teaching is typically lively and engaging. For example, during the inspection, pupils in Year 3 were enthusiastically discussing and writing about the uniform worn by a Roman soldier following a visit to the school from a 'real Roman soldier' the previous day. Leaders have ensured that the school curriculum is broad and rich, and provides pupils with a wide range of opportunities and experiences to broaden their horizons and make learning memorable.

Leaders have made progress in addressing the recommendations from the previous inspection. Provision in phonics and writing has been strengthened significantly. As a result, pupils' attainment has improved. However, not all pupils in key stage 1 are making good enough progress in these areas. The school was also asked to provide greater challenge in lessons for most-able pupils, to enable them to achieve the higher standards. In response to this, leaders have changed the way in which teachers plan their lessons so that activities provide an appropriate level of challenge for all pupils. As a result, pupils' progress is improving. In Years 3 and 4, more pupils are working at the higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics. However, there is still work to be done to challenge the most able pupils in reading and writing in key stage 1.

Leaders work closely with parents and carers. They have worked hard to establish good relationships and a level of trust. Parents value what the school provides, and this is reflected in the many comments praising the school. Parents hold staff and leaders in high regard. They say that their children are making good progress and are very happy to go to school. Parents appreciate the fact that there is always someone they can talk to, with several saying that they 'feel listened to'.

Pupils like their school and are very proud of it. They say that it is friendly, and the teachers are always kind and caring. Pupils enjoy the wide range of subjects they learn about and particularly enjoy trips and the visitors to school. They are polite and courteous. Pupils are confident to talk about their learning. In classrooms, they demonstrate positive attitudes to learning and take an active part in discussions.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding is at the top of leaders' and governors' agendas at all times. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and they have established an effective safeguarding culture. The designated safeguarding lead and two deputy safeguarding leads form a very effective team. They, and governors, are well trained and up to date with the latest guidance. Staff at all levels undertake appropriate training. As a result, they are knowledgeable about the procedures for keeping children safe and know what to do if they have any concerns. They report concerns promptly so that leaders can intervene quickly to prevent problems becoming more serious.

Leaders work well with external agencies. Good use is made of the support and advice they offer to meet the diverse needs of families and to ensure that pupils receive the pastoral support they need. Leaders have also worked hard to ensure that pupils attend school regularly. They have built good relationships with families, identifying barriers to attendance and working together to find solutions. Leaders promote and reward good attendance and punctuality and ensure that parents understand the importance of their children attending school regularly. Consequently, overall attendance rates have risen this year to just above the national average. However, the proportion of pupils who are frequently absent from school remains too high.

All pupils say that they feel safe at school. They acknowledge that sometimes they fall out with each other, but recognise that this is not bullying and they quickly make friends again. Pupils were clear that there is no bullying at Crabbs Cross and agreed that if bullying did occur, adults would help them to resolve the problem. Pupils speak confidently about how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations. For example, pupils have a good knowledge about how to stay safe when using the internet.

Inspection findings

- Effective teaching ensures that pupils make strong progress in the development of their reading skills. Staff hear pupils read regularly, which improves pupils' fluency and accuracy when reading aloud. Teachers make use of high-quality texts in lessons to capture pupils' interest and to motivate them to read. Leaders provide workshops for parents to equip them with ideas and resources to help them to support their children's reading at home. As a result, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in reading at the end of key stage 1 is in line with national averages for the past two years. Pupils continue to achieve well in reading in Years 3 and 4. However, the most able pupils can achieve more.
- In mathematics, pupils throughout the school make strong progress. This includes the most able pupils. This is because teaching matches pupils' needs closely. Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and pupils are well supported in lessons to achieve these expectations. Work in pupils' books shows that they are given sufficient opportunities to consolidate their learning and apply their mathematical knowledge.
- Published data shows that, in 2018, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in writing at the end of Year 2 rose to be broadly in line with the national average. However, for the past two years, the proportion of pupils working at greater depth has been well below national averages. Leaders have taken actions to remedy this. They have provided training for teachers to ensure that pupils develop strong writing skills from an early age.
- Work in pupils' books shows that, across the school, standards in writing are improving as a result of the actions taken by leaders. Pupils are developing their writing skills well. For example, the majority of children in Reception are able to write legibly in sentences using capital letters and full stops. Letter formation is accurate, as is the spelling of high-frequency words.
- In key stages 1 and 2, teachers challenge pupils to write in sentences of increasing complexity. As a result, middle- and high-attaining pupils' progress is improving. Pupils are beginning to catch up from previous underachievement and more pupils are now writing at greater depth.
- The school's previous inspection recommended that action be taken to improve the teaching of phonics. Upon taking up the headship in September 2015, you quickly took action to address this and improved the provision in phonics in key stages 1 and 2. As a result of these actions, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in the phonics screening check in Year 1 has risen significantly; however, it is still below the national average.

- In response to this, leaders have taken action to further strengthen phonics teaching in Reception, ensuring that provision is consistently strong across the school. These actions include providing additional training for teachers and the development of an effective phonics curriculum. The phonics sessions we saw during this inspection were of high quality. Teachers demonstrated secure subject knowledge and pupils responded enthusiastically. Pupils, including children in Reception, were able to correctly recognise a wide range of letter sounds and names and complete challenging activities successfully.
- Teachers also encourage pupils to use their phonic strategies during all reading and writing activities. Consequently, there has been a marked improvement in developing pupils' ability to apply these strategies. For example, we saw pupils in Year 1 using their phonic knowledge to spell unfamiliar words in their writing, such as 'luxurious'. In addition, we heard pupils throughout the school read challenging texts fluently and confidently. Teachers have carried out assessments of pupils in Year 1 which show that standards in phonics are continuing to improve.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- rates of persistent absence reduce further, by continuing to provide parents with the support they need to enable all pupils to attend school regularly
- teachers continue to plan activities that challenge middle- and high-attaining pupils in reading and writing, so that a greater proportion of pupils are working at the higher standards in these subjects.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Worcestershire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Janet Satchwell
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

With you and the deputy headteacher, I visited classrooms and looked at examples of pupils' work. I examined a wide range of documentation, including the school development plan, the school's self-evaluation document and records of safeguarding. Throughout the inspection, I held discussions with you and the deputy headteacher, including analysing the school's assessment information. I discussed

safeguarding policies and procedures with you. I met with two members of the governing body, including the chair.

I considered the 30 responses provided during this inspection to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and the 21 comments sent via free text. I also reviewed the three responses to the pupil survey and the 12 responses to the staff survey. I spoke to pupils and observed their behaviour, and I reviewed the school's website.