

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mrs Helen Friend
Headteacher
Ellesmere Port Christ Church CofE Primary School
Deeside
Whitby
Ellesmere Port
Cheshire
CH65 6TQ

Dear Mrs Friend

Short inspection of Ellesmere Port Christ Church CofE Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 13 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 March 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You took up the post of headteacher in January 2015 and since then you have brought in a number of changes, such as more rigorous checks on the progress of pupils. You have also managed well some previous instability around staff and governance. These actions have contributed effectively to the continuing improvement in the school.

You have effectively addressed the areas for improvement that inspectors identified in the previous inspection report. Evidence from current pupils' books and recently published assessment information shows that there has been strong improvement in pupils' achievement in mathematics, with significantly higher than average progress for some pupils by the end of Year 6.

You and your senior leaders now make more frequent and thorough checks on the quality of teaching through, for example, the analysis of pupils' work and observations of lessons. You provide written records of strengths and areas for development and feed these back to teachers. As a result, the quality of teaching is constantly improving.

Your plans for school improvement now have more precise statements about how you measure the impact of your actions on pupils' achievement. You have analysed recent assessment information and correctly identified areas for improvement,

which you have included in your action plan. Your current assessment information suggests that most pupils are on track to achieve standards appropriate to their age or better by the end of the school year.

You acknowledged that there are aspects of the school's work that still need development. I saw evidence that some of the most able pupils do not receive consistently challenging work in, for example, tasks aimed at improving their reading comprehension skills. This is because some activities contain too much structure, preventing pupils from making their own decisions about the content and depth of their responses. You also accepted that you need to make more regular checks on your school's website, so that it remains compliant and up to date.

You promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well and give them a firm understanding of fundamental British values. You have designed the curriculum to cater for these aspects effectively by a combination of planned lessons in, for example, religious education and programmes of assemblies and opportunities to discuss moral issues.

I spoke with a group of Year 6 pupils and it was clear from our conversation that you and your staff have created a learning environment where they feel safe, and are confident that adults will look after them well and will act if they have any concerns. They showed themselves to be polite and articulate. They understand the different types of bullying that exist, including homophobic and racist. They say such incidents are very rare, and staff intervene effectively and quickly when required.

A large proportion of the parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, showed that they appreciate the work of the school and made positive comments. They typically mentioned the school's 'family-like atmosphere' and described a 'loving and supportive ethos for both the children and the family'.

The local authority and the diocese have much confidence in your leadership skills. Although they understandably provide a 'light touch' level of support, they have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. You have an electronic system that you use to record all safeguarding concerns thoroughly and you respond appropriately, reporting concerns to external services as necessary. You also use the system to note other issues, such as incidents of serious misbehaviour, and records of these matters are equally thorough.

The safeguarding culture in the school is strong. Staff have received appropriate training and have a secure knowledge of how to recognise signs of different types of abuse, such as child sexual exploitation. Pupils know how to keep themselves

safe, for example on the internet, because their teachers regularly provide them with the relevant information.

Inspection findings

- I followed a number of key lines of enquiry during the inspection, which I shared with you at the beginning of the day. One of these concerned addressing the areas for improvement from the previous inspection, on which I have reported previously in this letter.
- Teachers provide a good level of challenge for pupils in key stage 1, especially in mathematics, stretching many of those of middle ability to reach greater depth in the subject. For example, in Year 2, evidence in workbooks shows that these pupils make rapid progress from identifying correct coins to make small amounts of money to solving problems involving subtracting three-digit numbers from each other.
- Evidence from pupils' books shows that disadvantaged pupils and boys in key stage 1 make strong progress in writing and mathematics. In mathematics in Year 2, for example, pupils progress well from simple ordering of numbers to 20, to finding fractions of numbers that are more-challenging for their age, such as finding one fifth of 20. In writing in Year 1, they make good attempts at quite complex sentence structures, using plausible attempts at spellings, such as 'It mayks (makes) a sownd (sound) like a cangrw (kangaroo).'
- In key stage 2, there is good evidence that teachers are putting extra emphasis on teaching English grammar, punctuation and spelling skills. They give pupils opportunities to apply their skills in their independent writing, highlighting and reinforcing the correct use of important features, such as verb tenses. They also challenge pupils to correct their spellings for themselves. Teachers regularly expose pupils to technical terms, such as 'relative clause' and pupils can readily explain them. All of these actions contribute to good and improving progress in pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills. The school's own assessment information indicates that the proportion of pupils in Year 6 on track to achieve the expected standard or better in English grammar, punctuation and spelling is above the most recent national average.
- Leaders and governors understand their statutory responsibilities, although they recognise that they need to rectify some omissions from the website and keep a closer check on it in future. Governors receive regular training in safeguarding and other relevant topics, and they effectively hold senior leaders to account. You and the governors are aware that there have been attendance issues and you are taking appropriate action to bring about improvements. These include analysing absence information to identify patterns, involving the local education welfare officer and ensuring that the school's learning mentor communicates with parents. There has been some success, because persistent absence overall has reduced and is now below the national average. However, you recognise that you need to continue to work on reducing other absences, especially for disadvantaged pupils and those who receive support for their special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the most able pupils have more opportunities to make their own decisions about the depth of their responses to questions, especially in work on reading comprehension skills
- they reduce absenteeism for all pupils, but especially those who are disadvantaged and those who receive support for their special educational needs and/or disabilities
- they keep a closer check on the school's website and make sure that it remains compliant.

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

Yours sincerely

Mark Quinn
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I carried out short visits to the early years, key stage 1 and key stage 2 classes, which were joint activities with you. I scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation summary, action plans for school improvement, records of incidents of bullying and misbehaviour, minutes of meetings of the governing body and records connected with the safeguarding of children. I held discussions and conversations with senior leaders, other members of staff, governors and pupils. I had discussions on the telephone with representatives from the local authority and from the diocese. I also analysed samples of pupils' work. I evaluated 14 responses received through 'Parent View', Ofsted's online survey. Additionally, I analysed 16 responses to the staff questionnaire and 20 responses to the pupil questionnaire.