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Dear Mrs Roberts

Short inspection of Chorleywood Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 6 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 previous inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in certain areas. This may indicate that the school is improving towards being outstanding. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

You, your leaders and governors provide clear direction, which creates a strong sense of community and purpose which motivates staff and pupils to achieve very well. Leaders and governors are reflective and provide detailed plans to secure continual improvement. Parents and staff alike recognise the very high quality and dedication of leadership in your school at all levels.

During the previous inspection, many strengths were identified, including: the quality of provision and the good start that children make in the early years; the use of technology; the knowledge and commitment to improvement demonstrated by your governors; the support for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities; the wide range of sporting opportunities offered to pupils; spiritual, moral, social and cultural education; and pupils' exemplary behaviour. These all remain strengths.

Since the previous inspection, leaders have maintained very strong outcomes for pupils. The large majority of pupils, including those who have SEN and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils, make strong progress and, as a result, in all

subjects, many achieve standards above those expected for their age. In all key stage assessments and all nationally assessed subjects, a greater proportion of pupils at Chorleywood achieve expected standards than is the case nationally. Despite this good performance, you and your leaders are highly ambitious to increase further the progress that pupils make.

You continue to offer a broad topic-based curriculum, which interests and inspires pupils, allowing them a degree of influence over the direction of their learning. You make good use of specialist schemes of work in subjects such as computing. Teachers work hard to plan lessons which engage pupils. The school's approach to teaching and learning makes good use of exploring real situations and problems. During the inspection I saw well-planned, challenging and exciting lessons. For example, a Year 5 class studying cryptography adopted a character on the Titanic and sent their imagined last message by Morse code from the green-screen deck. A class of Year 2 pupils tested a range of materials to ascertain which would be best to make teddy some blackout curtains as he could not sleep.

Pupils are very articulate, polite and well-mannered. They listen well and respect other people's ideas. Their attitudes to learning are extremely positive. Pupils enjoy their work and talk about their determination to do as well as they can. Pupils understand well and strive to use the school's 'learner' qualities, which are an integral part of daily life in Chorleywood School. Pupils are excited and highly motivated by the many 'star awards' that recognise their achievement. They are extremely proud of their achievement diaries. Pupils are keen to take on responsibilities and exercise democratic choices. They spoke about performing many duties, for example as class greeters, representatives on the school council, eco and sports committee members, line inspectors, peer mediators, peer readers, garden designers and lower-school helpers. Pupils also say that they enjoy the very wide range of clubs, trips and special events that are on offer. These are varied and high-quality. The school has invested in specialist providers in many instances, for example in dance, music, computing, art, cooking and Spanish. Pupils were also keen to talk about a recent visit to the House of Commons and about the 'Dream Big' science and technology events that they have taken part in.

Parents talk of how the school's approach to learning and well-being has helped their children to become more independent and more confident at home and of the efforts the school makes to support them in helping their children to learn. A number of parents of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities commented on the excellent provision for their children and the rapid progress that they are making. Parents are also highly appreciative of the school's approach to their children's personal development. This can be summed up by a parent comment that 'Chorleywood makes kind, considerate, ambitious and inclusive children'.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors ensure that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. As the safeguarding lead, you place the highest priority on keeping pupils safe and ensure vigilance at all times. You check that records are detailed and of a high

quality. All staff and governors receive regular training updates and know how to alert leaders to any concerns that they have. Visitors are provided with the necessary information should they have a concern. All staff take their roles and responsibilities seriously and are confident in knowing what to do if they have concerns. You work effectively with external agencies to ensure that pupils are kept safe and families are well supported. Where there have been concerns, you have been tenacious in following these through. Pre-employment checks on staff and records are comprehensive to ensure that they are suitable to work with children. You take all aspects of health and safety very seriously and there is good provision for pupils who have medical needs. Governors make regular checks on all aspects of safeguarding and health and safety.

All parents who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, feel that their children are safe. All pupils who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire and those with whom I spoke with said that they feel safe at school and that bullying almost never occurs. They are confident that staff would help them if they did have a problem and know how to seek advice if they need it. They talked about the arrangements in place such as the peer mediation service, which serve to prevent bullying. They have a good awareness of when they may be at risk and how to manage this effectively, including when using the internet. Pupils also talk very knowledgeably about staying healthy, both physically and mentally.

Inspection findings

- In your previous inspection report, inspectors recognised that in most lessons pupils were making very good progress because of very good teaching, but also noted some inconsistencies. They asked that leaders further improve teaching by working with other schools and sharing expertise within your school. During the inspection, I met with teachers and teaching assistants to discuss what opportunities they are given to develop their practice. They are highly complimentary about the guidance and support they are offered by you and senior colleagues. They value the opportunities they have to work with other colleagues within the school, the local area and through specialist training programmes. School staff have also supported improvements in other schools. The school is engaged in a number of development projects, for example a national STEM science project and the Hertfordshire 'Champions of Excellence' project aimed at developing outstanding schools.
- You have refined the school performance management systems to ensure shared responsibility and this has led to greater sharing of planning and teaching strategies. You and your leaders regularly observe teaching and monitor pupils' work, and staff are highly appreciative of the thoughtful, precise and challenging written and verbal feedback which they receive. Staff have areas to develop after each monitoring session and these are systematically followed up. Staff all feel that they are valued, challenged and encouraged to improve. This is clear in responses staff made to the Ofsted online questionnaire.
- Leaders and governors have invested significant resources into providing well-chosen programmes for teaching. Leaders have ensured that all staff are fully trained and that such programmes have been implemented fully and consistently.

You have renewed, implemented and systematically monitored the school assessment and feedback policy. As a result, it is now manageable, clear and very well understood by staff, pupils, parents and carers. In pupils' work which I looked at with your leaders, we noted that across all year groups, the implementation of school policy was entirely consistent. Pupils' next steps targets are helpful, lead to improvement and are always followed up by teachers and teaching assistants. One pupil summed this up by saying, 'I like the targets we get. They really help you get better. Teachers always help you challenge yourself.' However, this system is embedded more strongly in English and mathematics than in some of the other subjects.

- All teaching I observed with you during the inspection showed that teachers plan interesting and challenging lessons which demonstrate strong subject knowledge. Teachers and teaching assistants demonstrate significant skills in delivery of lessons, for example the skill with which they explain what is expected, question pupils and plan work which meets the needs of all their pupils. There is very effective use of teaching assistants to support pupils who need extra help.
- My second line of enquiry was about the actions that school leaders have taken to ensure that pupils make rapid progress in writing between key stages 1 and 2. Although pupils in the school achieve better than pupils nationally by the end of key stage 2, the progress they made from key stage 1 in writing in 2017 was not as strong as in reading and mathematics. I also investigated whether the very good test results achieved in grammar, spelling and punctuation are being used to support equally good outcomes in writing. The previous inspection report also noted that pupils' spelling and handwriting would benefit from some improvement.
- Leaders recognise this and have worked hard to put in place a number of changes and improvements. In early years, leaders have ensured that there are many opportunities for children to write for real purposes. This is a principle that continues throughout the school. Children choose to write independently and are also taught in focused sessions with adults. During my visit, I saw boys and girls choosing to write in a number of ways, for example: making shopping lists and store orders in their hat shop; writing prescriptions and plotting the trail of a bear hunt after enjoying the book. There is close attention to developing the physical capabilities that children need to write successfully. In key stage 1 the highly successful programme for teaching phonics and reading has been extended to writing in a thorough and highly consistent way and as a result pupils' written work in these year groups is showing strong progress and many pupils are working above age-related expectations.
- In key stage 2 leaders have implemented a clearly structured methodology for teaching writing which is consistently employed and very effective. Teachers use materials which really interest the pupils as a starting point for their own writing and this is helping them to write longer, more interesting pieces. Teachers use high-quality texts as examples to demonstrate what a good piece of writing looks like and to really understand how writers select their words and compose their texts. This is helping pupils to understand how to write well themselves. For example, Year 6 pupils watched a film extract about a refugee child's boat journey. They then wrote their own diary entry in role after looking at how

writers use emotive language. One pupil read out his work, which was so powerful that it moved others to tears.

- After each piece of assessed writing, pupils are set very specific personal targets based on next steps statements. These targets are always followed up by teaching staff and they are moved on by setting new targets as quickly as possible. This is now being very closely linked to applying pupils' strong grammar knowledge. Teachers build on this explicitly when teaching and when setting targets for further improvement. Leaders have also introduced a new spelling policy which helps pupils to learning strategies to improve their own spelling.
- In subjects other than English, pupils have regularly and carefully planned opportunities to write at length. These pieces of writing are taught explicitly, as in English, and are marked as a piece of writing as well as for the subject-specific qualities. When writing in other subjects, pupils are also reminded of their personal writing target and they are marked for this. Consequently, the benefits of reinforcing and practising the skills being learned in English are maximised, and pupils develop an extensive body of writing for different purposes and covering a wide range of topics.
- During the inspection, I looked at pupils' writing with leaders and saw that it is progressing very strongly as they move through the school. This is supported by the school's assessment information. Pupils are keen to improve their work as a result of feedback from adults, peers and through self-editing as they write. Pupils are keen to improve their writing and present it well. There are many examples of very high-quality writing across subjects and on the many high-quality displays around the school.
- Finally, I looked at how target-setting and assessment can maximise pupils' progress across foundation subjects. This had been identified in your own improvement planning. With leaders, I considered the school assessment method which subject leaders have developed. This is a very good start. It is designed to support pupils' progress and challenge in foundation subjects as they move through the school. It also helps teachers to plan lessons and materials which challenge and support pupils at different levels of understanding and skills acquisition. However, this work is at a relatively early stage. Currently school assessment information collected in foundation subjects shows variability in the proportions of pupils working at age-related expectations and above between subjects. As yet it is not possible for management to analyse this across subjects or for specific groups of pupils. It is also not clear how accurate teachers' assessments are. Teachers have not yet had the opportunity to compare their judgements with teachers from other schools.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the assessment and tracking of pupils' progress and target setting in all foundation subjects is equally as effective as in core subjects, so that pupils make the same rapid progress in all subjects.

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

Yours sincerely

Susan Sutton
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

- During the inspection, I met with you, senior and middle leaders, parents, governors and pupils and spoke with a representative of the local authority by phone.
- I visited all the classrooms and looked at pupils' work. I observed behaviour around the school.
- I reviewed the school's website and documents, including curriculum plans, the single central record, child protection systems, the school's self-evaluation and external evaluations, improvement plans, management monitoring information, pupil assessments and progress information.
- I took account of the 171 responses by parents and 25 responses from staff and 28 responses from pupils to Ofsted's online questionnaires, as well as 105 comments from parents by text.