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Mrs Sarah Flack
Headteacher
Charter Primary School
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Dear Mrs Flack

Short inspection of Charter Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 6 December 2018 with Teresa Hill, Ofsted Inspector, 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 January 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

As headteacher, you lead the school with a firm determination that all pupils will succeed, regardless of their background or level of need. This has led to Charter Primary School being a highly inclusive setting, where all pupils are fully integrated into school life. You are supported in your vision for the school by two effective leaders: your deputy and assistant headteacher. Collectively, you have an in-depth knowledge of the pupils in your school, as well as the barriers that many of them face in their day-to-day learning. Across the mainstream setting, as well as in the charter rose resource base, you have ensured that staff have the knowledge, skills and understanding that they require to maximise learning opportunities. Consequently, all groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), and the most able are making strong progress from their different starting points.

Leaders, including governors, have a secure understanding of the school's strengths, as well as the areas requiring further improvement. Through our discussions, however, you recognised that the school's development plans, including those for the spending of pupil premium funding, lack precision. This is preventing governors from holding school leaders to account with maximum rigour. You have put in place a robust programme of monitoring to ensure that success is celebrated, but also so that any weaknesses in provision can be identified quickly. As well as internal reviews, you have established links with a range of external providers who participate in your monitoring processes. This

additional level of scrutiny has strengthened your monitoring and is supporting governors in validating the information that you provide for them.

The subject leaders for English and mathematics, while relatively new to their roles, have an accurate understanding of their subjects and the areas which require further improvement. They speak knowledgeably about what they are doing to address weaknesses they have identified, but do not yet evaluate fully the impact their actions are having on improving pupils' outcomes, or the quality of teaching and learning in their subjects.

During the inspection, one of the most notable aspects was the strong behaviour exhibited by pupils. This was the case in pupils' attitudes to learning, as well as in their conduct at break and lunchtimes. Pupils are clearly proud of their school and spoke to inspectors articulately and knowledgeably. This was especially the case when we were discussing what it meant to pupils to be a 'rights respecting school'. You continue to work fastidiously in your efforts to raise levels of attendance for all groups of pupils. Although overall absence rates are currently slightly above the national average, they continue to fall, especially for disadvantaged pupils.

Nearly all parents who spoke with an inspector, or who completed Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, said that they would recommend the school to other parents. One parent, summing up the views of many, described the school as, 'a fantastic environment for learning and development which is led by an engaging headteacher with the assistance of her diverse and outstanding team of staff and teaching assistants'.

The previous inspection identified the need for leaders to establish better systems for the sharing of the strongest teaching, for teachers to provide greater challenge for the most able pupils, and for the curriculum to enable pupils to develop a better understanding of the different cultures that exist in modern Britain. Following the previous inspection, you wasted no time in implementing a range of initiatives and strategies to improve further the quality of the school's provision. For example, the school's focus on becoming a 'rights respecting school' has provided pupils with opportunities to explore different cultures both locally, in Chippenham, and further afield.

Teachers know their pupils well and make effective use of assessment information to provide work that meets pupils' different needs, including the most able pupils. Teachers provide the most able pupils with opportunities to apply their skills in different contexts and to deepen their understanding further. You have established an ethos of self-reflection among the staff. Leaders and teaching staff work collaboratively in reviewing and developing their practices. Across the school, there is a shared understanding of the quality of teaching and inspection evidence demonstrates that this 'open and honest' approach to school improvement is proving a key component in the school's ongoing development.

Safeguarding is effective.

As the designated safeguarding lead, you have ensured that the school's arrangements to keep children safe are effective and in line with statutory guidance. Records are

detailed and of high quality. This includes details of pre-employment checks, as well as records of referrals made to social care and the multi-agency safeguarding hub team.

Staff have a secure understanding of the school's procedures and know what they should do if they have any concerns. You have ensured that staff training is relevant and up to date. In our discussions, you demonstrated an appropriate understanding of the specific vulnerabilities faced by pupils, for example county lines and the dangers associated with online technology.

Pupils say that they feel safe in school, a view shared by every parent who completed Ofsted's online survey. Pupils say that bullying sometimes happens, but they are confident that, should they have any concerns, they have a trusted adult in school to whom they could turn.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection, we agreed the main areas of focus for the inspection. First, we agreed to consider the progress being made by current key stage 2 pupils and, in particular, pupils in Year 6 from their starting points at the end of Year 2. This was because published assessment information for key stage 2 outcomes in 2018 had indicated that pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics was well below that of other pupils nationally. As this was especially the case for middle-prior-attaining boys, we agreed that this group of pupils would be a key focus for this line of enquiry.
- Together with other leaders and governors, you have evaluated carefully the 2018 outcomes and considered the achievement of each individual pupil. Although there were a number of specific circumstances regarding pupils' outcomes in 2018, where amendments to the school's provision were warranted these have been made swiftly. For example, you have redesigned the school's assessment procedures to make greater use of external standardised tests. This has already added additional rigour and accuracy to teachers' assessments of what pupils can and cannot do.
- In reading, writing and mathematics, current pupils, including boys, are making strong progress from their different starting points. The work in pupils' books demonstrates that the vast majority of pupils currently in Year 6 are on track to reach the levels of attainment expected of them. This includes disadvantaged pupils, pupils with SEND, and the most able. Rightly, the school's focus is now on increasing the proportion of middle-prior-attaining pupils working above the standards expected for their age.
- Although not a specific focus of the inspection activities, our scrutiny of pupils' work from across the school highlighted weaknesses in pupils' handwriting and, for younger pupils in particular, their letter formation. You recognise that this is detracting from the quality of pupils' work, especially in writing and mathematics.
- In 2018, the proportion of Year 2 pupils assessed as being at the expected standard in reading was lower than the national average. This was despite prior attainment for this cohort of pupils being broadly in line with national averages. Our second key line of enquiry was, therefore, to consider how effectively leaders are ensuring that pupils in key stage 1 build upon the early reading skills that they acquire in the early years.

- The teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they represent) is effective. Teachers and teaching assistants have secure subject knowledge. They teach the sounds that letters make with accuracy and then support pupils in blending these sounds to make words. This is ensuring that the vast majority of pupils quickly develop their early reading skills and read with confidence. However, teachers do not consistently provide pupils who find phonics more difficult with reading books that are matched adequately to their developing phonic ability. During the inspection, these pupils were reading books that were too difficult for them and which contained sounds that the pupils had not yet learned. This is weakening the progress of these pupils.
- Having analysed 2018 assessment information from across the school, leaders recognised that there needed to be a greater focus on developing pupils' higher order reading skills, such as making inferences and deductions from reading a text. Recent changes to the school's approach to the teaching of reading are proving effective. A focus on whole-class texts is enabling pupils of all abilities to apply their reading skills and think more deeply about what they are reading. Assessment information for current pupils, supported by inspection evidence, indicates that greater proportions of pupils are now working within, and above, the expectations for their age.
- The proportion of pupils in the school with education, health and care (EHC) plans is much higher than that found nationally, and so our next line of enquiry was to evaluate the quality of the school's provision for pupils with SEND. This was for pupils in the charter rose resource base, as well as those being supported in the mainstream part of the school.
- Across the school, pupils with SEND are making strong progress towards the targets in their individual plans. Teachers and teaching assistants have high expectations for what pupils can achieve. The resource base is a safe and secure environment, which is well resourced. Where appropriate, staff provide pupils with opportunities to integrate into the mainstream school, for example during lunchtimes and some lessons. Planning is of a high quality and staff use their specialist expertise to plan activities which meet pupils' needs. Staff are highly effective in supporting pupils' behavioural needs and this is recognised by the pupils themselves. For example, one pupil told an inspector that he had not been excluded from school since being in the base and was now able to enjoy his learning. Parents of pupils in the resource base are positive about the support that their children receive and the information that the school provides regarding their children's progress.
- In mainstream classes, you have deployed staff effectively. Pupils who have EHC plans are well supported and during the inspection teaching assistants were using a range of different strategies to meet pupils' needs. Staff adapt learning activities well so that they are more accessible to pupils. They provide support but are also careful not to stifle pupils' independence. Where necessary and appropriate, staff provide pupils with safe spaces where they can regulate their own behaviour and quickly refocus on their learning.
- Our final line of enquiry was to consider how appropriately leaders are using exclusions as part of an effective behaviour management strategy. This was because, in recent years, the proportion of pupils receiving a fixed-term exclusion has been well above the national average. This has especially been the case for pupils who have an EHC plan.

- Inspection evidence indicates that exclusions are being used as part of an agreed approach to behaviour management and are recorded in line with statutory requirements. It is clear that pupils are excluded as a last resort and only when the safety of pupils and staff can no longer be guaranteed. Pupils who, in previous years, have received fixed-term exclusions have been well supported on their return to school. Other pupils have been placed in provision better suited to their needs. The school's behaviour records highlight that behaviour is improving and the number of fixed-term exclusions has reduced accordingly.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- progress is strengthened further so that greater proportions of pupils and, in particular, middle-prior-attaining pupils, are working above the expectations for their age
- additional rigour and precision is added to the school's development planning, including for the spending of pupil premium funding
- middle leaders continue to develop their practice and have a greater focus on the impact their actions are having on pupils' outcomes
- pupils improve their handwriting, letter formation and levels of presentation in subjects across the curriculum
- in key stage 1, teachers provide pupils with reading books that are matched precisely to their level of phonic development.

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

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Dyer
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, we met with you, your deputy headteacher and other senior and middle leaders. We discussed the school's self-evaluation, information about pupils' progress, as well as the improvements made since the school's previous inspection. Together with school leaders, we observed pupils in classrooms, both with the mainstream part of the school and the charter rose resource base, and spoke with them about their learning. We analysed work in pupils' books from across the curriculum. The team inspector listened to a selection of pupils read and talked to them about their reading.

Inspectors had discussions with members of staff and two governors, including the chair of the governing body. I also had a telephone conversation with a representative of Wiltshire local authority. We looked at a range of written evidence, including documents relating to safeguarding. I took account of the views expressed by 23 parents who completed the online survey, as well as their written comments.