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Mrs Julia Hancock
Headteacher
Captains Close Primary School
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Dear Mrs Hancock

Short inspection of Captains Close Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 15 November 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 February 2015.

This school continues to be good.

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

You lead the school with care and commitment. All leaders work together to promote an ambitious vision that develops pupils' values and attitudes that help them to be successful. Staff across the school share a continual commitment to improve teaching and help pupils to achieve the best possible outcomes.

You understand the school and staff strengths well. You work effectively with the Discovery School Academy Trust (DSAT) cluster lead. You ensure that middle leaders receive effective training and support to undertake their roles. This has widened leadership and responsibility across the school. The leadership team is now well placed to refine and clarify plans to continue to move the school forward.

Leaders and other staff relish working with a range of experts and other schools to inform improvement. Your partnership with DSAT gives the school access to a range of effective training and work with other schools. This has enabled the school to successfully adapt to changing national expectations. As well as learning from others, school leaders are committed to sharing school expertise. For example, you are proud to show others what you have learned through the Royal Shakespeare Company's (RSC) National Associate Schools Programme.

Leaders ensure that the advisory board and trust are well informed. DSAT is developing effective systems to support its schools to improve the quality of information available to inform next steps. The cluster leader is successfully balancing challenge and support to help you improve the rigour and impact of plans to improve teaching and learning. This is ensuring that good teaching is sustained across the school.

At the time of the previous inspection, leaders were asked to improve the teaching of writing, including improving the range of pupils' vocabulary and spelling. You have provided staff with effective training and resources. As a result, these aspects have improved.

Leaders were also asked to improve how teachers use checks on learning to ensure that pupils make more rapid progress. A wide range of effective training is ensuring greater consistency across classes and ensuring that teachers have a consistent understanding of age expectations. Assessment of progress against age expectations is being used with increasing accuracy to inform planning. However, there is still work to be done to adapt planning more precisely to meet the needs of different pupils.

Attainment at the school is high over time. However, there is variability in rates of progress for pupils with different starting points, including less confident learners and the most able pupils. It is a high priority in the school's improvement plan to secure more consistency in rates of progress for different pupils.

Pupils' good behaviour and attitudes have been maintained and indeed built upon. Pupils are proud of their school. They feel safe and well supported by all adults. For example, Year 6 pupils told me how much they value choosing an adult to be their 'pupil champion' to help them with their transition to secondary school.

Leaders' chosen approach to the curriculum is ensuring that pupils' attitudes and approaches to tackling learning are well developed. Older pupils are conscientious in supporting younger children, such as through running clubs and being pupil leaders. They appreciate how the school is helping them to prepare for their next steps of education. A pupil told me that, 'as you go up the school, the learning grows with you'. Interesting topics ensure that pupils enjoy their learning. However, systematic development of knowledge and skills across other subjects is not as well thought through as for English and mathematics.

Parents I spoke to and the vast majority of parents who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, agreed that their children are happy and safe. Most parents have a very high level of confidence in the school. Parents value the care and approachability of staff in Reception that ensures their children make a positive start to school. However, a minority of parents do not feel information and decisions have been well communicated. Evidence gathered during the inspection showed that leaders consistently draw on a range of views and information to respond appropriately to issues that occur. Leaders are mindful that they should find ways to ensure that all parents feel equally well informed.

You ensure that pupils and parents are reminded of the importance of attendance. As a consequence, rates of attendance are well above national averages.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose.

You make sure that appropriate vetting checks take place before an adult starts working at the school and that staff receive up-to-date training in keeping children safe. You keep detailed safeguarding records securely. The well-organised school business manager provides effective support, and diligently follows thorough DSAT procedures.

Staff are clear about how to report a concern about a child's welfare, should one arise. Advisory board members receive appropriate training and regularly check school procedures. The trust provides effective monitoring and support.

Leaders work well with other agencies to ensure that pupils and their families get help when they need it.

Inspection findings

- We looked together at how effectively reading is being taught. In line with the school's chosen approach to teaching reading, teachers use interesting texts to engage the whole class in analysing the language, intent and impact of the author. Visits to classrooms showed that you have secured consistency in effective questioning by teachers to guide and deepen pupils' understanding of what they are reading.
- Staff are effectively using strategies to improve the use of language across the school, based on strategies they have chosen to adopt from the RSC Associate School Programme. This is having a positive impact on both reading and writing, enabling pupils to confidently explain their understanding when reading, and use sophisticated language within their writing. For example, pupils in Year 6 were exploring the use of phrases such as death-marked and fatal loins to show the foreboding in 'Romeo and Juliet'.
- You have also been successful in promoting increased enthusiasm for reading across the school. Pupils spoke positively about teachers signposting them to interesting books. They also told me they like answering questions about the books they read. In all classes, teachers consistently plan opportunities for pupils to read together across the curriculum. Pupils were happy to read to me and showed fluency, expression and understanding. Parents also told me that they value the classroom workshops you offer, so that they understand how to support their children better.
- The deputy headteacher leads on inclusion and works closely with the special educational needs coordinator who supports several trust schools. They have improved the clarity of roles and responsibilities in identifying and planning

support for pupils. They are also ensuring that communication with parents is timely.

- The development of the role of the emotional literacy support assistant and specialist teacher has also had a positive impact. The team is effectively building up the trust of families and pupils.
- Leaders are using improved information to more swiftly identify where pupils are not making the progress expected of them. However, pinpointing and planning of precise next steps to rapidly move pupils' learning forward is not consistent, especially for less confident and most able pupils.
- You ensure that interesting topics are used effectively to link learning across subjects. You consistently ensure that topics are driven by quality texts, and develop pupils' social, emotional, spiritual and cultural awareness. The local vicar gave pupils information about local war heroes from the First World War. The pupils used the book 'War horse', combined with sensitive artwork, to stimulate writing to express their empathy. They created a book that was shared in church. Year 5 pupils reflected poignantly on soldiers' emotions, 'When they saw the wounded, they realised they weren't playing at being soldiers anymore.' However, the overall framework of knowledge and concepts which you want pupils to learn, for example in science, geography and history, is not as well developed as it is in English and mathematics.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers use assessment information to improve precision of planning, so the progress made by pupils is consistently stronger
- the knowledge and concepts that you want pupils to learn across the school for other subjects are mapped out as clearly as in English and mathematics, so pupils make strong progress across a range of subjects.

I am copying this letter to 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 Leicestershire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Mandy Wilding
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you and the DSAT cluster lead and shared my lines of enquiry. I met with the deputy headteacher, who has responsibility for inclusion and assessment. I also met staff with leadership responsibilities for English, mathematics, early years, and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. I met with members of the advisory board and representatives of DSAT. I spoke with pupils informally in class and held a more formal meeting with pupils from Years 5 and 6. We jointly visited classes to observe pupils learning, speak with them, look at their books and hear pupils read. We examined a range of pupils' books from across the school.

I reviewed a range of documents, including leaders' evaluation of the school's current performance and its plans for further improvement. I considered a number of policy documents, including those for safeguarding. I examined the school's website and checked on the publication of specified information. I spoke to parents at the beginning of the school day and considered the responses of 40 parents to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and 39 free-text responses. I also considered the 21 responses to Ofsted's online staff survey. There were no responses to Ofsted's online pupil survey.