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Mrs Alison Carter
Headteacher
Courthill Infant School
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Dear Mrs Carter

Short inspection of Courthill Infant School

Following my visit to the school on 25 April 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in December 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last 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 specific areas. This may indicate that the school has improved significantly overall. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

Together, you are a strong and capable leadership team. You have a deep understanding of the school's effectiveness. You use your evaluations to keep the school improving by tackling any minor relative weaknesses as soon as they appear.

Leaders at all levels are steadfast in their efforts to ensure continuous school improvement. As a result, leaders' actions are highly successful in remedying any weaknesses because they quickly focus on the impact of their actions in key areas and keep on maintaining improvement. Governors systematically hold leaders to account with rigour and have a very strong understanding of the school's performance. They do not shy away from providing comprehensive challenge to ensure that the school is serving its pupils consistently well.

Teachers have consistently high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Teachers use their strong subject knowledge and assessment practices to ensure that teaching is closely matched to pupils' needs. Teachers who are new to the profession or year group are supported well by senior staff to ensure that strong

and consistent teaching for pupils is maintained.

Since the school has opened, the proportions of pupils who leave the school with skills and knowledge in line with, and above, their age has been considerably higher than that seen nationally in reading, writing and mathematics.

Pupils become engrossed in the learning challenges set for them. They show high levels of resilience in their learning because the system in place to assure this is consistently applied by teachers and pupils. As a result, pupils do not give up and learn from mistakes with confidence. Pupils say that their work is sufficiently challenging. They are proud of their achievements and their school.

Pupils are polite and kind to one another. They have a strong sense of right and wrong and understand the importance of treating everyone equally. Pupils enjoy school and attend well. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the whole school offer and the excellent progress that their children make socially, emotionally and academically.

Safeguarding is effective.

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. There is a strong culture of safeguarding across the school. Staff training, and recruitment checks, are up to date and in line with current guidance. Staff apply their training well to keep pupils safe. Safeguarding records are organised systematically and show appropriate detail. Leaders with the designated responsibility for safeguarding work with external agencies and make timely referrals when pupils are at risk of harm. Pupils say they feel safe. The school's curriculum encourages pupils to think proactively about keeping safe and healthy. An example of this is their proactive work to improve road safety as a school council. Children benefit from a range of opportunities, such as the visiting 'health bus' to explore keeping safe and healthy. Pupils say that the school helps them keep physically healthy and that their emotional and mental health is nurtured.

Inspection findings

- The first aspect I looked at was the quality of education on offer in Reception. Children in Reception get off to a flying start. They receive a curriculum that is consistently demanding and interests and motivates them exceptionally well. The learning environment is stimulating and interesting. The learning experiences on offer are rich and varied. Children are eager to join in. As a result, children get absorbed in their learning and maintain their concentration very well. Children show pride and excitement in their achievements.
- Teaching is well thought out and provides ample opportunities for children to practise their learning inside and outside. Staff interactions when children are learning independently are timely and help children progress in their learning.
- Teaching is precisely focused on building on what children know, can do and understand. Teachers check children's understanding systematically. The school's strategy to provide very specific teaching to address any gaps in children's

knowledge is effective in enabling children to catch up quickly. Children entering the school with limited language and communication skills receive specific support to develop their skills and knowledge. They are prepared well for Year 1.

- Another aspect I looked at was the effectiveness of the teaching of phonics and reading. The teaching of phonics and early reading is typically very strong. Pupils learn the phonic code quickly. Carefully targeted teaching meets pupils' needs well over time. As a result, pupils can read accurately and apply their knowledge of phonics to read unknown words well. There is a strong emphasis placed on reading across the school. Consequently, those pupils who have previously struggled to read catch up. The vast majority of pupils read accurately and demonstrate a strong understanding of what they read. The school's current strategy in Year 2 to extend pupils' vocabulary even further is paying dividends and ensuring that pupils have a good understanding of what they read.
- I also examined the impact of the teaching of writing. Pupils' achievements in writing have been high for a number of years. The whole school system to provide pupils with individualised support and advice to improve their writing is highly effective over time. Pupils take a central role in addressing the advice they are given to improve their writing. Workbooks demonstrate that pupils adhere to this system exceptionally well. As a result, by the end of key stage 1 pupils make very strong progress in their writing. Pupils write with precision and many have skills and knowledge above those which are expected for their age. Pupils present their writing consistently well and use and apply their writing skills across a range of subjects with equal rigour. The vast majority of pupils who had previously low attainment catch up. In some cases, some current Year 2 pupils who struggled academically on arrival to the school have skills and knowledge exceeding those expected for their age.
- A small minority of pupils in Year 1 with average ability make good progress in their writing but do not make the excellent progress that pupils make elsewhere in the school. In these instances teachers use specific interventions between lessons to help pupils to consolidate their learning. However, on occasions teachers do not adjust their teaching to address misconceptions when they arise or pupils do not apply their knowledge and application of phonics to spell accurately. Conversely, these pupils spell common exception words very well because of the acute emphasis on this aspect across the school.
- Another aspect I looked at was the impact of the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils and those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The leadership of funding is effective in ensuring that these pupils make strong progress over time. Teaching and timely intervention and support ensure that pupils' learning and emotional needs are met exceptionally well. Most pupils make considerable progress from their different starting points.
- The final aspect I examined was pupils' attendance. Over time, pupils' attendance has been above the national average and few pupils have been persistently absent. However, last year too many disadvantaged pupils were absent too often. Leaders have remedied this weakness successfully. They have put new, more rigorous systems in place to track pupils' attendance. Persistent absence has reduced for this group of pupils markedly. Nearly every pupil who suffered

previously low attendance now attends well. As a result, no group of pupils is disadvantaged due to low rates of attendance.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- misconceptions are tackled and teaching adjusted so that all pupils in Year 1 use and apply their understanding of phonics to their writing to spell accurately.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer (CEO) of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Julie Carrington
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I spoke with you, your extended leadership team, and a group of class teachers. I held a meeting with three governors. I held a telephone discussion with the school's 'challenge partner' who is employed by the trust to provide an external evaluation of the school's work. I also met with the CEO. We made visits to lessons in every year group to observe pupils' learning and gather their views about their learning. Together, we scrutinised pupils' work from a range of year groups. I also listened to pupils read from Years 1 and 2. I visited the out-of-school care provision.

I considered a range of documentary evidence, including: development plans; external reports of the school's effectiveness; school performance information; evidence to exemplify how leaders support and challenge teachers to ensure that pupils make strong progress; analysis of pupils' attendance; documented evidence of the governing body visits to the school; and safeguarding documentation.

In addition, I took account of 132 responses to the Parent View online survey and the free-text messaging service. I also took into account 19 letters from parents. In addition, the 149 responses to Ofsted's online pupil survey and 29 responses to Ofsted's online staff survey were analysed and considered.