

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mrs Melanie Cripps
Headteacher
Lifton Community Primary School
North Road
Lifton
Devon
PL16 0EH

Dear Mrs Cripps

Short inspection of Lifton Community Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 16 March 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 December 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Throughout my visit to your school, it was clear that pupils are eager to learn as part of a warm, harmonious community. Pupils give of their best in lessons, and their work in books show they take care with their presentation and handwriting. Pupils remarked how learning was made fun, especially outside, where the forest school activities play a significant part in the uniqueness of your school. Parents recognise that, despite being in a rural setting, the activities available to pupils within and beyond the school are plentiful and rewarding.

You and your leaders have an accurate understanding of why the school is successful, and you plan effectively to bring about further improvements. As a result, you have significantly raised standards in many areas of the school's work since the previous inspection. In particular, children get off to a good start to their education in the pre-school and Reception classes. The proportion of children reaching or exceeding expected standards has risen year on year and is projected to be well above average in 2017.

Following the previous inspection, you strengthened teaching by ensuring that pupils are moved on in their learning more routinely. Your use of the 'speech bubbles' to capture pupils' gains in knowledge, skills or understanding, the moment they occur, is proving very successful. Teaching is characterised by high expectations and good subject knowledge that promotes pupils' enjoyment and engagement in learning and ensures their good achievement.

Throughout the school, pupils learn well. Your emphasis on outdoor learning and maintaining a breadth to your curriculum shines through in the richness of the displays around the school. Class books showcase the depth of learning occurring to develop pupils' personal, social, emotional and health education. Activities planned not only develop pupils as 'well-rounded' individuals, but serve to enhance their understanding of safety and well-being effectively.

Leaders at all levels play their part in continually improving standards in the school. Regular checks on the quality of provision in subjects contribute to the overall school improvement plan well. The leadership of English, mathematics and the early years is characterised by enthusiasm, detail, passion and good subject knowledge. This, in turn, is reflected in teachers' and pupils' positive attitudes toward the activities planned, and is having a positive impact on pupils' current rates of progress. Occasionally, the monitoring conducted, to establish what is working well and what needs to be further improved, along with the reporting back to governors, is too general. Therefore, precise actions in improvement plans or the headteacher's report to governors are not always clear enough for teachers or leaders to improve specific aspects of their practice or pupils' learning.

The school is an inclusive community. Increasingly, through special learning days, you are extending pupils' knowledge of people's lives beyond their own community. In turn, this is building strong values of teamwork and respect for all.

Safeguarding is effective.

Time and again, adults and pupils reported that safeguarding 'lies at the heart of your school'. You ensure that the culture of safeguarding is strong. I saw evidence that all staff are vigilant and alert to a wide range of indicators of concern. They confidently use the school's systems to report concerns. This is because of a prompt and rigorous induction process for staff, where you set out your expectations of conduct in respect of all aspects of safeguarding. Leaders and governors have adopted the guidance in the current statutory documentation for keeping children safe and have updated the school's safeguarding policy. You and all other staff and governors are trained at the correct level for your respective roles.

You follow up induction with regular and wide training, including on how to act if pupils are at risk of radicalisation. In discussion with your staff, and review of documents, I can see that you report any concerns about pupils promptly to the appropriate services. If the response of that service is not timely, you persist until you are confident that a pupil is safe. When recruiting staff, you make and record all checks on their suitability to work with children, in line with current guidance. Your records are comprehensive, and governors check them regularly. Pupils feel very safe and say that any concerns will be dealt with promptly and effectively. They told me how they would never be a bystander if there was anything which concerned them. Parents agree that their children are safe.

Inspection findings

- One of the lines of enquiry that we followed concerned the progress of pupils in reading across key stage 2. The steps you have taken to improve their progress, and match pupils' performance in reading to that in other subjects, are having a positive impact. Pupils' enjoyment of reading is evident. They analyse texts in detail and provide thought-provoking points of view or perspectives on themes and topics.
- Teachers have broadened their knowledge of high-quality texts. They use this to make recommendations to pupils, particularly boys, in order to maintain and promote engagement in reading. Your new system for analysing pupils' performance in reading is providing more detailed information, from which improvement can be made. It is also providing a healthy degree of competition between pupils, which is motivating them to read more.
- Another area we explored was how well girls were being pushed in mathematics. Your analysis of girls' performance, following results from the 2016 national assessment, revealed that while girls' attainment was good, they were reluctant to risk errors in mathematics. This hindered them from learning from mistakes and bettering their performance.
- Training to develop pupils' mathematics skills is bearing fruit overall. On our learning walk, we particularly noted pupils' readiness to think more deeply and explain their understanding. For example, Year 1 pupils were keen to explain their understanding of direction to move robots using tablet devices. Older pupils confidently tackle questions that challenge assumptions, such as ' $6 \text{ divided by } \frac{1}{2} = 3$ ', and provide good explanations of why this mistake is often made. From looking at work in older pupils' books, this type of questioning is beginning to be a more consistent feature of everyday mathematics work.
- Our joint scrutiny of books pointed to some minor variation in practice across the school. Girls in the Year 5 and 6 class build on their skills well. Bright and engaging activities are promoting their enthusiasm for mathematics. Precise questioning to check pupils' conceptual and procedural knowledge is helping older pupils overcome barriers to learning and to make good progress. Younger pupils cover a broad range of activities and topics. Occasionally, they are moved on to a new concept too quickly, without securely grasping the one they are studying.
- The curriculum in mathematics is not enabling more pupils of average prior attainment to reach the higher standards. Concepts are not developed sufficiently well for these pupils, particularly in Years 1 to 4. Topics jump from one area of mathematics to another and present as a somewhat 'piecemeal' approach. As a result, not enough of these pupils are progressing as well as their most able peers. You are aware of this issue.
- A further area we explored was whether the most able pupils were being sufficiently pushed. Pupils' work in geography shows their good understanding of contrasting localities and map work. They have, through historical enquiry, acquired a good knowledge of how Britain shaped the world. Pupils are familiar with key people in history, such as Mary Seacole or Edith Cavell, and major

events, such as the Spanish Armada. Pupils enjoy the approaches used to challenge their learning in daily lessons. Although pupils' progress is improving, and they are generally guided well by teachers to select from a range of problems and activities at increasing levels of difficulty, you recognise there is always room for more challenge.

- Finally, we looked at how well the additional funding for children in the early years was supporting their development. The early years provision is a hive of busy activity. Children engross themselves in the wide variety of indoor and outdoor activities available. Adults carefully observe, watch, listen and capture children's small steps in development in the comprehensive and high-quality learning journeys. Imaginative methods are designed to capture children's imagination and develop their good understanding of letters and the sounds they make. As a result, all children, including those eligible for additional funding, are making good progress from their starting points.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the curriculum in mathematics is developed so that understanding of concepts is fully developed within and across year groups, and all pupils are supported to reach even higher standards
- the challenge and focus on the most able pupils' achievement is maintained
- monitoring provides more precise next-steps for leaders and teachers to develop their practice and for specific aspects of pupils' learning that require further improvement.

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

Yours sincerely

Richard Light
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you and the leaders for English, mathematics, early years and special educational needs. Three members of the governing body, including the chair, met me to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The views of a number of parents were gathered through their responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. Visits to all classrooms were conducted jointly with you to evaluate the impact of teaching on pupils' learning, to review the quality of pupils' work over time, and to listen to pupils read

and talk informally with them about their experiences of school. A range of documentary evidence was evaluated, including documents relating to safeguarding and governance.