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Mrs Rebecca Allard
Headteacher
Trinity Croft CofE Junior and Infant School
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Dear Mrs Allard

Short inspection of Trinity Croft CofE Junior and Infant School

Following my visit to the school on 23 January 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in October 2009.

The school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You and your staff have built a 'can do' culture across the school. You effectively seek out ways of overcoming pupils' barriers to learning in an effective manner. Despite pupils entering school with standards below those typical for their age, they make strong progress over time. This is because the high expectations you have for all your staff and pupils goes hand in hand with high-quality teaching. As a result, pupils are well prepared for secondary school by the time they leave Year 6.

You know your school inside and out. You and your senior leaders have a clear and accurate handle on what is going well and what needs further improving. You have an impressive track record for leading year-on-year improvement, particularly in phonics and attendance.

You have a strong focus on continuous improvement and a desire to learn from other schools. Your teachers visit other schools and see examples of effective practice that they are using well back in school, particularly in Nursery and Reception. There are effective opportunities for children, especially boys, to develop their writing and mark-making skills. The trust has also provided timely and useful support through 'peer challenge' visits, which has helped provide helpful recommendations for further improving pupils' attainment by the end key stage 1.

You and your staff have created a school culture that is both inclusive and

welcoming. One member of staff spoke for many when she described the school as having a 'family feel'. Parents recognise and appreciate the friendliness of staff and this helps build a genuine bond of trust between home and school. Pupils are inquisitive and say hello to visitors to the school. Pupils are also developing a good understanding of what it means to be an effective learner. They show good listening skills, and are encouraged to ask questions and be curious in their learning.

Although relatively new in post, your senior leaders provide good additional leadership capacity. They clearly demonstrate the impact they are having. For example, pupils' progress in mathematics has significantly improved and current progress information, coupled with sampling work in exercise books, shows that high standards are being maintained.

Governors have a generally secure strategic overview of the school. They are rightly proud of the school's achievements and are ambitious for the school to continue improving. They have a good understanding of how some additional funding is used but are less clear on the impact that other funding is having in Nursery, Reception and for those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Leaders and governors agree that improvement plans could be better. Sometimes, targets for improvement are unclear. Governors therefore struggle at times to know the impact that actions are meant to be having. This sometimes hinders governors' ability to challenge leaders. Governors have also recognised the need to engage more with leaders across the school to help them gain a better strategic overview.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have successfully created a culture in which all staff see it as their responsibility to keep children safe. Staff report any concerns they have, no matter how small. This can help you and your staff build up a bigger picture of concern. Staff are highly effective in taking prompt and appropriate action when concerns arise.

Staff feel confident and secure in spotting signs when a pupil may potentially be at risk. This is due, in part, to the highly effective and regular safeguarding training of staff. You have given great thought to making sure that training really considers your local context. Staff have benefited from recent training, which has included identifying the signs of far-right extremism and child sexual exploitation.

The school works very well with other agencies and professionals. Child protection files I sampled have clear and detailed case histories and show that school leaders are proactive in making sure that pupils are safe. Child protection plans also have clear targets, including improving a child's attendance or their emotional well-being, for example. Checks on the suitability of staff to work with children are carried out on all staff before they start work in the school and the record of these checks is well maintained.

You have created good relationships between staff and parents. You and other members of staff are at the school gates at the start of the day. This provides

parents with an opportunity to raise any concerns they may have. Parental and pupil surveys confirm that children feel safe when at school.

Inspection findings

- Leaders have successfully improved attendance over time. Pupils' attendance is now better than the national average. This has been due to sheer hard work and dogged determination. Staff pick children up from home when necessary, provide a wide range of rewards and certificates for good attendance and make daily phone calls home to check on absent pupils.
- Teachers are successfully improving provision in Nursery and Reception. There is now a wide range of boy-friendly topics that have been introduced, including space, castles and pirates. These are encouraging boys to write with a purpose. There are more opportunities for children, especially boys, to engage in mark-making, both in the classroom and in outdoor areas. Current in-school assessment information shows that teachers are successfully improving writing.
- Leaders have invested a great deal of time, effort and resources in improving the teaching of phonics. As a result, phonics teaching is a real strength of the school and has led to year-on-year improvements. In 2017, the outcomes for Year 1 pupils in their phonics screening check were well above the national average. Well-trained teaching assistants are able to target the specific needs of each pupil. Leaders carefully check the progress pupils are making and current information shows that pupils continue to make very strong progress in developing their phonetic knowledge.
- Inspection evidence shows that key stage 1 standards in 2017 were below the national average. This was partly due to specific issues with some pupils that had a significant impact on attainment at the end of Year 2. However, leaders are not complacent and rightly recognise the importance of further improving attainment. Inspection evidence gathered shows that teaching continues to improve and pupils continue to make good progress.
- Pupils in key stage 2 continue to make good progress in English and mathematics. Learning is engaging, challenging and pupils are developing effective learning habits. Pupils' topic books also show some good coverage of other subjects, including science, geography and history. Leaders agree that further work is needed in making sure that topic work is suitably challenging, especially for the most able.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- improvement plans clearly show the intended impact that actions will have on pupils' progress, including the use of additional funding
- topic work over time provides more stretch and challenge for different groups of pupils, including the most able
- governors gain a greater strategic oversight by engaging more frequently with

other leaders across the school to evaluate the impact of their work.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the Director of Education for the Diocese of Sheffield, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Rotherham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Phil Smith
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, your senior leaders and a group of subject leaders. I also met with a group of governors, members of the Diocese of Sheffield Academies Trust and I had a telephone conversation with the trust's performance director. Together with you and other leaders, I visited classrooms to observe teaching and to look at pupils' work. I listened to some pupils' reading. Consideration was given to the 38 responses from Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I evaluated recent information in relation to pupils' progress, the school's own self-evaluation document, the school improvement plan and a range of documentation about how you keep pupils safe. I also sampled some vulnerable children's case files.