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Mr Tim Clarke  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Clarke

### **Short inspection of Cornerstone CofE (VA) Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 30 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 the school was judged to be good in May 2015.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

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

At the time of the last inspection, Cornerstone had 68 pupils and three classes. Now, Cornerstone is a busy, thriving one-form-entry primary school, with the first Year 6 class firmly established this academic year. The school remains in temporary accommodation. Despite this, leaders have ensured that the environment is vibrant, clean and safe, pending the building of the new, larger school. With the growth in the number of pupils, leaders have ensured that when staff join them they quickly understand the Cornerstone way. As a result, the school's values of love, forgiveness and hope thread through the everyday life of the school. Relationships across the school are strong. As one parent wrote, 'This is an absolutely wonderful school, with great teachers and an incredible spirit. Couldn't recommend this school more.'

Leaders think meticulously about how the curriculum meets the needs of the current pupils, reviewing and developing the curriculum on an annual basis as a new year group is created in the school. Consequently, the curriculum is broad, balanced and interesting. Leaders have a clear curriculum vision, 'inspirational Cornerstone', which is shared successfully with staff and pupils. This focuses on growing the skills that pupils need in order to become life-long learners. During my

visits to classes, I could see how pupils work hard and persevere in their learning when they find a task tricky.

Pupils enjoy school life at Cornerstone. They told me that they particularly enjoy science and art, and going on school trips. There was much excitement in the school following the recent 'Rock Challenge' dance competition that the pupils had participated in, reaching a respectable fourth in the final. Pupils enjoy learning, saying that their lessons are fun. Pupils told me that Cornerstone is a friendly school and that there is 'always someone to play with'.

At the time of the last inspection, leaders were asked to improve the progress that the most able pupils make in writing. Leaders have been successful here, resulting in, in 2018, at the end of key stage 1, the proportion of pupils reaching a greater depth in their writing being in line with the national average. Assessment information and work in pupils' books shows that the proportion of pupils working at a higher standard in writing has steadily improved. You were also asked to ensure that leaders at all levels impact further on the leadership of the school. You are focused on continually improving the leadership skills of your staff. Middle leaders are fully involved in evaluating the quality of teaching and learning in their areas of responsibility. Staff have risen to leaders' high expectations. The staff team is energised and ambitious for the school, and morale is high.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Policies, procedures and day-to-day routines are secure. Communication between staff is strong. Staff know what to look out for and report any concerns swiftly. Pre-employment checks to ensure the suitability of staff are fully in place. Safeguarding training is regular and up to date. As a result, staff and governors understand their roles and responsibilities well. As one parent commented, 'We are absolutely delighted with the caring and nurturing environment our daughter has experienced at Cornerstone. She is thriving academically and socially.'

Pupils have a strong knowledge of how to keep themselves safe online. For example, they told me that if they received a nasty message online, they would not delete it as they would need to show an adult. Pupils said that bullying does not happen often, but when it does, teachers 'always do something about it'.

### **Inspection findings**

- At the beginning of the inspection, we agreed that the focus would be on: how well the most able pupils are challenged in their learning; the progress pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, make in writing; and how effectively leaders and governors ensure that the school continues to improve.
- During my visits to lessons and while looking at pupils' work, it was clear that the most able pupils are challenged well in English and mathematics. Teachers' questioning extends pupils' thinking well. However, this level of challenge was less apparent in subjects other than English and mathematics, particularly in

areas of the curriculum where teachers' subject knowledge is less strong, such as music and geography.

- Pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, make strong progress in writing. Leaders have ensured that planned writing tasks catch pupils' imagination and engage them highly. For example, in a Year 2 writing lesson pupils displayed a compelling understanding of how to use a range of conjunctions, while excitedly writing a postcard based on the story 'Meerkat Mail'. Pupils show strong perseverance in writing and know how to improve their work through editing and redrafting. Leaders provide teachers with many opportunities to be involved in the moderation of writing with colleagues from other schools. As a result, the assessment of writing is accurate. Teachers plan opportunities for pupils to practise and develop their writing skills across the curriculum. However, teachers' expectations of the quality of pupils' writing in subjects other than English are not consistently high, especially in pupils' use of punctuation, spelling and handwriting.
- Leaders and governors have a good understanding of the strengths and improvement areas for the school because of precisely focused monitoring. Professional development of staff is well-planned and links closely to the personal needs of teachers, as well as school improvement priorities. Leaders have created sharp, measurable targets in their development plans, with clear timescales. Consequently, governors are able to support and challenge leaders effectively. Governance is a strength of the school. Governors have ensured that their training is closely linked to the school's development plans, so that they can ask the right questions of leaders. Teamwork permeates through the school, with staff motivated to 'growing an inspirational learning community'. Leaders and governors have established an ambitious and strategic vision for the future of the school, as it continues to grow.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teaching raises the level of challenge for the most able pupils in subjects other than English and mathematics
- teachers' expectations are consistently high across the curriculum regarding the pupils' use of basic skills in writing, including punctuation, spelling and handwriting.

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

Yours sincerely

Lea Hannam  
**Ofsted Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with you and your senior leadership team to discuss the school's effectiveness. We visited classrooms to observe pupils' learning, talk to pupils, and to look at their work. We looked at the quality of work in a range of pupils' books. I considered 48 responses from parents to the online questionnaire, Parent View, including free-text comments. I also spoke to parents at the beginning of the school day. Responses to Ofsted's staff and pupil questionnaires were considered and I had a meeting with a group of pupils to discuss their views about the school.

I met with seven governors, including the chair of the local governing body, and held a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority. I evaluated the school's safeguarding arrangements. A wide range of documents was examined, including the school's self-evaluation, school-improvement planning, information about pupils' progress, and various policies. I also examined the school's website.