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Mrs C Jones and Mrs J Midwinter
Interim Headteachers
Nutley Church of England Primary School
High Street
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Dear Mrs Jones and Mrs Midwinter

Short inspection of Nutley Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 8 June 2016, 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 2012.

This school continues to be good.

There has been much change over the last year in staffing and senior leadership. Parents are supportive of the school, but they and the pupils are understandably concerned about this. Nevertheless, these difficulties have been well managed by senior leaders and the local authority to minimise disruption to the pupils' learning.

Improvement has been particularly marked since Christmas. As joint interim headteachers, your carefully considered work is key to this. The governing body, which also has many new members, is effective and is developing its work carefully. The local authority has supported and advised the school well, not least by providing your services as interim headteachers. As a result of all this, the school has sustained and at times rebuilt good provision and good outcomes for the pupils. The school has now appointed a substantive headteacher and deputy headteacher for September. A full complement of teaching staff is also in place for then. You have made sensible transition arrangements to ensure a smooth handover.

The school has a lovely, friendly atmosphere. The school's gentle but coherent Christian ethos is apparent in all of its work. Pupils are sparky, funny, bright, knowledgeable, articulate and confident. They behave very well indeed and are caring of each other. At its last inspection, the school was recommended to use mathematics more effectively across the curriculum. This has been suitably

accomplished. Pupils achieve well in English and mathematics. They enjoy many good learning experiences across all other subjects in the curriculum. The school provides aptly for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. However, more is yet possible. Despite generally good and well-structured teaching, pupils are not challenged enough in every lesson, nor allowed to use fully their good skills to make their learning really fly. More still can and should be expected of all of them, across all subjects, including science, the humanities and the arts.

Safeguarding is effective.

The school's procedures for keeping pupils safe are appropriately managed. Staff are regularly trained in safeguarding procedures, which they clearly understand. Safeguarding is, helpfully, a standing item on staff meeting agendas. Pupils feel safe and well looked after. Any requiring particular support receive it in a timely way. Staff vigilantly and safely return their pupils to parents and carers at the end of the day. The school makes systematic checks on staff and others who come into contact with the children, when they are recruited and as needed. Governors check the school's processes carefully. The school site is both secure and welcoming. Safeguarding or health and safety concerns have led to the recent introduction of activity 'zoning' in the playground, as well as the temporary closure of the school field. Neither is popular with the pupils. Rightly, you are seeking to resolve these sensibly expressed concerns.

Inspection findings

- As interim headteachers, you lead the school well. You focus on the most important matters and ensure that any gaps or deficiencies in what the school does are quickly addressed. You have minimised negative impacts of staff turnover by carefully planning ahead and making expectations clear. In doing this, you have gained the active support of staff and parents.
- You evaluate the school honestly and accurately. The school improvement plan is an effective working document.
- Staff performance is appropriately managed. Many staff are leaders of subjects. They carry out this work with enthusiasm and some success. Their personal targets include this work. But there is more yet to do to ensure that there is a really demanding curriculum in each subject and that pupils can reach their aspirations, fully use all of their talents and achieve very highly.
- Pupils make good progress in English and mathematics throughout the school, with a particular strength in reading. They consistently reach above-average standards in the national assessments at ages five, seven and 11. However, in Year 6 in 2015, too few pupils reached the higher levels, particularly in writing and mathematics.

- Pupils' writing that I scrutinised was of a generally good standard for the ages concerned. Pupils showed imagination and interest; their writing was usually well presented and tailored to the specific purpose. Their use of grammar and punctuation and their application of spelling rules were sound. However, I saw few examples of really excellent writing: this is one example of how more is still possible for the pupils.
- Teaching of phonics (linking letters and sounds) is well organised. Pupils achieve well in their lessons and performed strongly in the formal Year 1 screening in 2015.
- The pupils who met with me are very happy at the school. They enjoy what it provides. They really like the varied activities: sport, music, drama, art and residential visits. They see the recent positive changes. However, they also feel, with justification, that the work set for them is not always challenging enough; it can be too easy at times.
- Pupils are pleased that they have opportunities to take on responsibilities. Examples include being play leaders and school councillors. The group that met with me instigated an animated and thoughtful discussion about whether or not more responsibilities should be given to younger pupils. They were respectful of each other's differing opinions. This shows the lively potential in the school.
- The teaching and provision for pupils with special educational needs or disability are good and improving. This provision is carefully managed. These pupils achieve well.
- The school has very few disadvantaged pupils who are entitled to the support of the pupil premium funding. Generally, these pupils achieve well. However, it is not clear that the planned expenditure of pupil premium for 2016/17 is sufficiently focused on meeting the specific needs of the eligible pupils. This should be re-considered.
- In the lessons we observed together, teachers and other adults explained things carefully to the pupils. Much of the staff's questioning and feedback to pupils was very good. The pupils knew what was expected of them and worked hard at their tasks. We agreed that, in some cases, teachers needed to let the pupils' learning go further and to expect more of them. This applies to all pupils, but particularly to those who attain highly in particular subjects.
- The Reception class is very well organised. Staff plan interesting and valuable learning activities based closely on the children's interests and assessed needs. Adults interact with children productively. Good resources are readily available for pupils to choose and use. Pupils make good progress and develop strong skills. They are well prepared for Year 1.
- Pupils' attendance is good for all groups. There have been no recent exclusions. The school has suitable procedures to promote high attendance.
- Middle leaders, who are usually responsible for one or more subjects in the school, do useful work. Pupils enjoy an engaging curriculum. However, in this transition period, some areas and subjects have had relatively little attention. You recognise that building up subject leadership further is vital to raising expectations higher still.

- The governing body has also experienced many recent changes of personnel. It has had to rebuild itself. Despite this, it has been well led and fully competent at a time when it has had to make some crucial decisions. Its members carry out useful training and have become increasingly skilled in asking challenging questions of senior leaders. They recognise the importance of making their visits to school, and their questioning, more systematic.
- The local authority supports the school well. It has been supportive and effective in seeing the school's needs and helping it through an uncertain period. Where there have been difficulties along the way, it has proactively arranged additional solutions. It is aware of the need to continue to support the school under its forthcoming new leadership.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- expectations of all pupils are raised, especially higher attainers, so that the school has a clear culture of very high standards in everything it does
- the role of all subject leaders is developed in promoting that culture
- the use of pupil premium funding in 2016/17 meets the precise needs of the entitled pupils more fully.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the diocese of Chichester, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for East Sussex County Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Robin Hammerton
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I visited lessons in all classes in the school, jointly with the interim headteachers. I scrutinised pupils' work. I talked with pupils informally and in a group. I observed around the school, including at the end of the day and during a sports activity. I held discussions with the interim headteachers, members of staff, governors, the headteacher designate and an officer of the local authority. I looked carefully at the 25 responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, which included written comments. I also considered confidential responses from pupils and members of staff to Ofsted's questionnaire. I evaluated documents, including the school improvement plans, information about pupils' progress and minutes of meetings.