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Mrs Ann Beardall  
Headteacher  
Harpley Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School  
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Dear Mrs Beardall

### **Short inspection of Harpley Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 7 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 February 2011.

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

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

In this very small school, you and your team create a nurturing, friendly environment where pupils feel safe and are valued as unique individuals. You provide interesting and stimulating experiences for pupils and encourage wide participation in musical activities, sporting opportunities, residential trips and after-school clubs. Staff support you and are proud of the school and the pupils in their care. You and your leaders have made changes to move the school forward and are determined to continue to improve the school.

Pupils talk about their school with enthusiasm and pride. They use the word 'family' to describe the school's caring atmosphere. Its Christian ethos contributes to pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and is at the heart of everything the school does. Values such as compassion, tolerance, democracy, trust and creativity are fervently promoted and are an intrinsic aspect of the school's work. Pupils understand that such qualities will enable them to become responsible adults in the future. They also say that differences are respected and celebrated, and that regardless of differences in age or ability, pupils play and work together well.

You and the assistant headteacher have successfully implemented the new curriculum and devised a system that monitors pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics. You efficiently gather and summarise information about the progress of different groups. Due to the very small numbers of pupils, analysis of this information to a very fine level enables you to quickly and accurately identify which of them need additional support. Consequently, each pupil's needs are considered carefully so that they are continuing to make at least good progress from their starting points in reading, writing and mathematics.

Leaders have taken effective action to ensure that the areas for development identified at the time of the last inspection have been dealt with. The focus on improving writing is evident in the pupils' work. Pupils are given very clear guidance about how to improve their work. They use this information well to measure their success and work out what they need to do next to improve. For example, a pupil shared with me that she had remembered, without a reminder from the teacher, to, 'use connectives in my sentences so they went together better as it is one of my writing targets and I can tick it off'. Pupils are taking more responsibility for their own learning and thinking about what they can do to improve further. This continues to be an area the school will focus on.

Pupils generally enjoy their lessons and are keen to talk about what they are learning. For example, during this inspection, younger pupils were enthused as they worked in the 'messy area' designing and making their go-karts. In Year 5 and Year 6, pupils enjoyed showing they could accurately use their calculation skills to successfully find squared and cubed numbers. However, opportunities are sometimes missed to deepen pupils' understanding of key topics and apply this to more complex activities. You recognise that more teaching needs to challenge the most able pupils and react flexibly to their emerging needs in lessons.

Since the previous inspection the school has entered into a federation with a neighbouring school. This is a positive change for the community and leaders are ensuring that the benefits of this partnership are being fully realised. Teachers are already sharing expertise across the two schools and pupils are enjoying working with each other at the weekly 'swap days' for modern foreign languages and science. There is currently great excitement within the community as both schools work towards planning the Olympic-themed 'federation day' to celebrate the joining of the two schools in the summer term.

You are working well with the governors to make sure that staffing changes from September 2016 do not affect the good quality of education pupils receive. Effective succession planning is in place. Analysis of the plans and discussions with you and the chair of governors show that considerable thought has been given to all possible scenarios. Current evidence indicates that the recent recruitment of staff, the re-allocation of subject leader roles and the additional opportunities that being a federation offer will secure an effective transition for staff changes taking place.

## **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders and governors have ensured that statutory requirements are met. The single central record of the checks for staff recruitment are appropriate and up to date. Staff have received the relevant training to ensure that they are able to recognise the signs that a child may be at risk and know how to report their concerns effectively.

Pupils are taught how to stay safe in different situations and have a good understanding of this. They say they feel safe in school and know who to go to if they have a problem. They also have a very in-depth knowledge of how to stay safe online. This was evident even for the Reception children and those pupils in Year 1 and Year 2 who are encouraged to 'share an e-safety message with a friend'. Pupils talk enthusiastically about ways the school helps them to behave towards others. For example, they all speak highly of their learning about 'trust' when the Bishop of Lynn visited and spent time leading activities and discussing what 'trust' means. Pupils report feeling able to know when to trust someone or not. All of the parents who responded to Parent View (Ofsted's online questionnaire) agree that their child feels safe and is happy at school. However, some safeguarding processes are not as formalised as they could be. These procedures rely heavily on you, as the designated safeguarding lead, with little evidence of discussion, review or challenge by other staff, leaders or governors. As a result, although pupils are safe, these systems are not as rigorous as they could be.

## **Inspection findings**

- Pupils achieve well. They make good progress in key stage 1. This continues in Year 3 through to Year 6. As a result, pupils leave the school well prepared for secondary school with standards that are above average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils were observed participating in purposeful activities in all three mixed-age classes. Reception children were learning about the vocabulary used when asking questions and used it accurately when writing their own sentences. Pupils in Year 1 and Year 2 learned how to use apostrophes as 'contractions' accurately. They were able to apply them in their own writing because the teacher modelled their use effectively. In Year 3 and Year 4, pupils used compact addition methods to add four- and five-digit numbers. They were successfully able to explain place value and used this knowledge to check their calculations were accurate. In Year 5 and Year 6 pupils worked with squared and cubed numbers. They demonstrated proficient number skills and capably discussed their reasoning with their classmates. Pupils in all classes were enthusiastic, focused and self-motivated to learn in purposeful environments. However, the most able pupils were not always challenged well enough in lessons to progress more quickly. There were occasions when the most able pupils were eager to move on to use their skills but were stopped from doing so because it was not what was planned. This leads to pupils' opportunities to extend their learning being limited.

- The information about how well pupils are doing varies a lot from year to year because of the very small numbers in each year group, as well as for the different groups represented at the school. Pupils are making at least the progress expected for children of their age. This is particularly so for the younger children. You and the governors have identified that the proportion of children in the early years achieving a good level of development needs to improve and are confident this will be the case for 2016. Over the last three years, pupils' achievement has mostly been in line with, or above, what is expected nationally in reading, writing and mathematics. In 2015, in Year 6, all pupils made expected progress or above by the time they reached the end of the year.
- The group of children who did not achieve a good level of development by the end of Reception class last year have received intensive support in all areas and, as a result, have caught up. Your assessment information and pupils' books show that currently pupils in Year 1 are making good progress from their starting points.
- The teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) to those in the early years and key stage 1 is developing their skills in blending and sounding letters so that they can spell unfamiliar words. As a result, many of the pupils reach the standard expected in the Year 1 phonics screening check. On the occasions when they have not, support has been successfully put in place and pupils have gone on to achieve the expected standard by the end of Year 2. In 2015, all pupils in key stage 1 achieved the level expected of them.
- Pupils are very confident talking through mathematical reasoning and are proficient in completing and explaining written methods of calculation. For example, in Year 3 and Year 4 pupils working on written calculations accurately explained the place value knowledge required to ensure they could do it successfully. When asked why a '1' was being taken over to the next column, the pupil responded by saying 'it is not a 1 it is a 10 because 5 plus 6 is larger than 9 and if a number is a ten it has to be moved to the tens column, or if it is a hundred it has to be moved to the hundreds column'.
- Leaders have rightly been concentrating on making sure that the standards in writing are as good as they are in reading and mathematics skills. Due to this focus, effective planning for individual pupil needs, and the increasing opportunities for pupils to practise aspects of their writing in English lessons and other subject areas, many pupils are now making good or better progress.
- Pupils are given regular practice in developing their skills in spelling, punctuation and grammar. For example, in their English lesson learning about questions, Reception children were able to choose appropriate vocabulary and use the correct punctuation to write a range of questions independently and successfully.
- You and your leaders have worked diligently since the previous inspection to ensure that the curriculum is moulded around the interests of the pupils, particularly meeting the needs of the most able pupils while also developing their opportunities to write extensively in a range of different topic areas. For example, pupils talked about their writing when they had dissected a heart in science in order to explain the different sections of the heart and how it works.
- The small number of pupils who have special educational needs or a disability are supported effectively because their needs are identified early on in their

education. From this point, individualised, well-planned support is provided and consequently they make good progress from their starting points.

- The school environment is bright, colourful and vibrant. High-quality displays showcase and celebrate pupils' work. In addition to this, classrooms also display helpful prompts to aid learning. All areas of the school are well looked after and pupils are keen to show visitors around. During my tour of the school, a pupil nostalgically reflected about the time they had been in the school from Reception through to Year 6 and commented proudly on the pride that every pupil has in the way the school looks.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning. They are taught to respect each other's views and listen to each other. This was demonstrated very well in a whole-school assembly when pupils were talking about events that were important to them. All pupils listened attentively and showed this by asking pertinent questions about what was being shared.
- The school's Christian character underpins the culture of the school. Pupils also have a good knowledge and understanding of those from other cultures and with different beliefs. For example, a group of Year 2 pupils were learning about Judaism and were participating in a Jewish Shabbat meal as part of the lesson. Pupils explained accurately the importance of the meal to the Jewish people.
- Pupils behave very well and love their school. Pupils said jokingly that they 'could not get away with anything because it was such a small school and the adults just know', and followed this up saying, 'we try hard to follow the rules because it's the right thing to do and we do not want to let anyone down'. Pupils understand the behaviour policy and are clear about the rewards and consequences of their actions in place. They particularly like being mentioned and highlighted by their teachers in the Friday assembly when they have been seen to demonstrate one of the school's 'values for life' without prompting to do so. School records and the views of parents also provide evidence that behaviour is good. There are very few incidents and pupils feel sure that if something happens or they are worried, there is always someone to talk to and any problem is dealt with swiftly and effectively.
- Pupils enjoy school and attend well. Attendance is monitored closely and bespoke support is provided for particular cases to help families. Parents receive regular communication about how important every school day is and pupils are recognised for achieving this.
- You and the governors collect the views of parents and pupils regularly and this provides helpful feedback for further improvements. Parents are extremely happy with the school. They have very positive views and appreciate the care and quality of education their children receive. One parent wrote on Parent View (Ofsted's online questionnaire), 'the facilities, extra classes and trips the school arrange are brilliant, fun and educational. We are so happy the boys are at Harpley. As parents, we know they are safe and being cared for in an environment that is like an extended family.'

## **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they routinely check that all records of staff safeguarding training are in place
- all staff complete the paperwork for safeguarding incidents in detail and that subsequent actions are recorded with precision
- teaching allows the most able pupils, when they are ready, to deepen their knowledge and skills without having to wait for their classmates to catch up.

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

Yours sincerely

Tracy Fielding  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During this one-day inspection, I met with you, the assistant headteacher, a representative of the local authority and the chair of the governing body. I discussed the work of the school with you and carried out a couple of visits to all three classrooms at various times throughout the day. During these visits, I looked at pupils' work and spoke to them about their learning. I also met with some pupils and spoke to them about their work, behaviour and their understanding about how to keep themselves safe. I also observed pupils' behaviour at lunchtime as well as in lessons and around the school.

I looked at a range of school documents including the checks on staff members' suitability to work with children, the school's information about pupils' progress, behaviour and attendance and leaders' action plans and reports on teaching. I checked that the school's website included all the information that ensures it is compliant in meeting statutory requirements. I took account of the 18 text messages from parents during the inspection, and the 27 responses to Parent View, together with 25 responses to the pupil questionnaires and 10 from the staff questionnaires. I also looked at the school's own analysis of parent and pupil surveys that have been undertaken over the academic year.