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8 December 2016

Mrs Susan White
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Dear Mrs Susan White

Short inspection of Newton Longville Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 08 November 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 November 2011.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Following weaker outcomes in some areas in 2015 national tests and assessments, you have successfully instigated many necessary changes. You initially implemented these last academic year in your role as deputy headteacher. Since becoming headteacher in September 2016, you have rigorously ensured that these changes are even more far-reaching. Consequently, in 2016 key stage 2 national tests and assessments, pupils' outcomes improved, and are set to improve further this academic year. In particular, pupils' achievement was above average in reading and mathematics in key stage 2 tests. You have instilled staff with confidence, drive and ambition. They, like you, are determined to improve the school further. Your analysis of what the school needs to do next is accurate and well prioritised. You are wisely focusing on developing writing because pupils' achievement in writing in national assessments was not quite as strong as in mathematics and reading. In addition, although a higher than average proportion of pupils reached the higher standards in key stage 2 tests, the proportion in key stage 1 was more in line with national averages. You are, therefore, astutely concentrating on improving this by ensuring that all teaching is sufficiently stretching.

You have appointed a number of new leaders, some of whom are more experienced than others. You recognise that some leaders will need further development in order to make a deeper contribution to improving the school. You are developing their leadership skills by working with them closely. You have successfully directed,

both subject and senior leaders, so that the changes they make have a positive impact on pupils' outcomes. You sensibly check that this is the case, through rigorous and well planned monitoring activities. Your checks to date also indicate that recommendations from your previous inspection report have been fully implemented. By working effectively with leaders and teachers, you have also enriched the curriculum and improved teaching.

The staff have provided opportunities for pupils to immerse themselves in short bursts of cross-curricular learning and enhanced the range and quality of the non-core subjects that pupils study. You insist that immersive learning experiences leave a legacy that strengthens pupils' progress. Consequently, pupils have honed, developed and applied their key skills through completing tasks in a range of new and stimulating contexts. A good example is the way you have strengthened pupils' abilities to write in different genres. In addition, teachers have made good use of film to capture pupils' inspired responses when, for example, they have attended special events and visited museums as part of cross-curricular projects. They have used these films adeptly to enable pupils to build on their work when back in class and to track the new skills pupils acquire. In addition, you have ensured that non-core subjects are well taught, enabling pupils to develop their creative, artistic and linguistic skills. Of note is pupils' learning in music. Through effective input from a combination of peripatetic teachers and the school's own staff, pupils are becoming proficient in musical notation. They can employ different musical forms to give their compositions texture. You have ensured that this approach serves the needs of experienced musicians as well as it does those of novices.

Developments are successfully rolled out across the school. In particular, leaders in key stage 1 and early years have been at the vanguard of improvements. Teaching in phonics is strong. The school predicts that approximately 90% of pupils will reach the expected standard in phonics in the 2017 check. This is an increase, following a dip in pupils' scores in the phonics check in 2016, compared with 2015, when they were well above average. Teaching in phonics is strong because it ensures that pupils have the opportunity to practise their blending and segmenting skills with unfamiliar as well as familiar words. The level of challenge in phonics is indicative of the high expectations teachers now have of pupils' progress in key stage 1. Developments in phonics have been successfully driven by the key stage 1 leader, who works in close partnership with the early years leader. As a result, there is a helpfully consistent approach to teaching early reading in Year 1 and Reception. Similarly, the early years leader has made changes that have strengthened children's progress. In particular, she has developed a more analytical approach to the way adults use their assessments of children's skills. Teachers and assistants have a strong impact on developing children's crucial language and literacy skills as they play, by, for example, probing questioning. Consequently, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development in 2015, and in 2016, was well above average.

In surveys completed during the inspection, the vast majority of parents praised the school for the support and nurture it provides. One commented, 'My children are happy at this school. They are taught good values. The school community has a

family feel'. You and your staff know the pupils very well and this enables you to provide each one with the guidance, stimulation and encouragement they need to thrive. For instance, you have successfully improved the attendance of pupils eligible for additional funding. Your key values of respect, aspiration, compassion, friendship and thankfulness underpin all that you do, and effectively encapsulate the school's Christian ethos. Pupils are well aware of how these link to the guiding principles that are embodied in British values. You have further perpetuated the school's mantra, through recent developments, in which pupils are required to collaborate on projects in small groups, incorporating the ideas and views of their peers. Pupils behave well and are often genuinely enthralled by the work they do. In addition, you have successfully implemented the recommendation, from your previous inspection report, relating to embracing a range of cultures. The school now provides well-planned opportunities for pupils to learn about the cultures and religions that are represented in the pupil body, as well as in the local, national and global communities, with which you link. Your partnership with a school in Zimbabwe is central to this. Of note is the way pupils that have used their letter-writing skills to forge meaningful links with their peers in Zimbabwe.

Governance is developing under your auspices. Governors are now clearer about their role in holding the school to account. In particular, governors have placed greater emphasis on supporting and challenging the school to improve the curriculum. Meeting minutes (written by governors) indicate that the governing body has robustly challenged the school's leaders to increase the proportion of pupils reaching higher standards in national tests and examinations. Governors have sensibly undergone training to support them in holding leaders to account for improvements in this area. The chair of the governing body keeps a watchful eye on the training governors receive to ensure that it is both relevant to the school's development and supports governors in their safeguarding role. Governors also now check that school policies are both in line with local authority policies and bespoke to the school. This relates to a recommendation from the previous inspection report.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that staff are fully trained, including in their 'Prevent' duty, and that policies and procedures are fit for purpose. You have watertight assurances that staff fully apprehend their safeguarding responsibilities because you assess them on their understanding of the latest government guidance.

You have ensured that all safeguarding records are detailed and of high quality. Of note is your insistence that staff record all concerns no matter how small. This is so that you can piece together as full a picture as possible of each pupil and, where appropriate, make links between concerns. You rightly ask for guidance from the local authority in deciding whether concerns reach the threshold for a referral to social services. Where they do not, you sensibly provide additional support, working in close partnership with a range of providers, including charities. You have strong links with the local registered pupil referral unit and closely monitor the support it provides to ensure that it is well focused and effective.

Inspection findings

- Changes instigated by the then deputy headteacher, who is now the headteacher, over the last 18 months have led to much-improved outcomes, especially at key stage 2. In 2016 key stage 2 tests and examinations, pupils' progress in mathematics and reading was significantly above average.
- Governance has improved because governors have a better understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. This is, in part, through their involvement in both writing and monitoring the school development plan. Of note is the frequency with which the chair of the governing body visits the school. She wisely uses her visits to keep a watching brief on the school's development. Governors have benefited from the training they have received on understanding data and on the curriculum.
- Leaders and teachers ensured that pupils were well prepared for key stage 2 examinations so a greater than average proportion reached the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics. The proportions were notably higher than average in reading and in mathematics.
- Most-able pupils achieved highly in 2016 key stage 2 tests and assessments. A higher than average proportion of pupils with higher starting points reached the higher standards in reading, writing, and in mathematics. They did not do quite as well in key stage 1. You and your staff are dedicated to improving this.
- Outcomes in writing in key stage 2 were not as strong as in other areas but are improving as a result of the effective approaches teachers are employing. One example of this is the way drama was being used in a lesson to help pupils reflect on the impact of their writing. Pupils were required to act out their paragraphs, written in the horror genre. This helped them to identify, and further refine, how key grammatical features can inspire powerful emotions, including confusions and fear. Pupils made strong progress as a result of this approach.
- In key stage 1, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in reading and writing was well above average. The proportion reaching it in mathematics was in line with average. However, the proportion working at greater depth was below average. Improving this is a focus for the school. You have rightly got strong plans in place to ensure that all teaching provides opportunities for pupils to apply skills and learn topics in greater depth. Predictions based on current assessments indicate that the proportion achieving greater depth will be well above 2016 averages in 2017 tests, especially in reading, and in line with national averages in mathematics and writing.
- Teaching in phonics is well planned and pupils are making strides in their reading skills. The school is predicting that the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the phonics screening test will rise by 13%. This is borne out by effective teaching observed during the inspection.
- There are small numbers of disadvantaged pupils. They generally achieve in line with other pupils nationally and in some areas they achieve more highly than others nationally. Disadvantaged more-able pupils' achievement is stronger in key stage 2 than in key stage 1. However, there are typically fewer than five disadvantaged pupils in each year group. The school assiduously tracks their progress and attainment on an individual basis.

- Cross-curricular learning is well planned so that it incorporates moments of awe and wonder that feed pupils' imagination for some time. Leaders ensure that teachers are clear about the literacy and numeracy skills that need to be strengthened through this approach. Parents have praised the cross-curricular work, one commenting, 'My children are enthused by the topics they are learning at school.'
- The teaching in non-core subjects, and in science, is effective because teachers have strong subject knowledge, especially in music and science. As a result, pupils confidently employ key subject language to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding.
- As a consequence of closely monitoring the attendance of disadvantaged pupils last academic year, the attendance of this group improved so that it was above others in the school. National figures for attendance for 2015/16 are not yet available.
- Subject leaders have made good use of links with partner schools to check that their assessments of pupils' work, using new, bespoke approaches, are accurate. Predictions for pupils' achievement in national tests and examinations, based on these assessments, were largely accurate.
- You have supported subject leaders very well, by modelling how rigorously you expect their monitoring of teaching and pupils' learning to be. As a result, subject leaders' input into the school development plan has been well focused. You rightly judge that some require further development, and have thorough plans in place for this, which include support from external consultants.
- The early years leader is highly effective and has ensured that the proportion of children reaching a good level of development has been above average for the last two years. Staff know each child's strengths and weaknesses very well, and wisely monitor the choices children make in their play. They use this effectively to tailor the support they provide for each child and to encourage children to vary their play activities. A good example of this is the encouragement given to boys, where the need arises, to do more mark-making.
- Pupils generally behave well and exhibit a real zest for learning. Where pupils need more support to respond positively to learning, they are provided with what they need. This includes support from external agencies. Leaders closely monitor the impact of support provided by external partners. Pupils spoken to during the inspection commented upon how well looked after they are and how safe they feel. Pupils are aware of the diverse nature of society and their school community. They fully understand that they have a key role to play in ensuring that all pupils are treated equally.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- all teaching is as effective as the best seen in the school, so pupils gain a deep understanding of the subject and confidently apply their skills at a high level.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of Oxford, the regional schools commissioner and the director of

children's services for Buckinghamshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Hubbard
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

The lead inspector, along with the headteacher, agreed the key areas that would be focused upon during the inspection in an initial meeting. They were drawn from the school's own evaluation. They included the breadth and depth of the curriculum, improvements in phonics and writing (including in early years), along with impact of the school's actions to improve the proportion of pupils working at greater depth in key stage 1. One key line of enquiry was also focused on improvements in the attendance of disadvantaged pupils. Another important focus related to the role of the governing body.

I met with subject leaders (who are also year group leaders) twice. On the first occasion, the meeting focused on the impact of their work on developing teaching. On the second occasion, they used pupils' books to illustrate the impact of their improvements on outcomes and also shared information on pupils' achievement. I also met with the chair of governing body, accompanied by two other governors, and met separately with the headteacher to discuss safeguarding and attendance. The diocesan adviser also held a meeting with me. I listened to a group of pupils read and talked with them about their school. Short visits were made to lessons in key stages 1 and 2, as well as in early years, to observe learning in core subjects, phonics and some non-core subjects. Most visits were accompanied by the headteacher. I observed pupils' behaviour in a range of situations, including in lessons and around school, and also looked at some pupils' books. The 51 responses parents made on Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the 51 comments made via free text were considered. I also considered 22 responses to the staff questionnaire. I analysed a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, the latest improvement plan, information about pupils' progress and safeguarding documentation.