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Mrs Alison Ward  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Ward

### **Short inspection of Witherley Church of England Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 9 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 September 2011.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have a clear and accurate understanding of the school's areas for development. Middle leaders have worked with you to produce an appropriate action plan to further increase pupils' progress. Staff, governors and pupils share your high expectations.

You have created a safe and caring environment for pupils at the school. Staff and pupils embody the school's Christian values and treat everyone with respect and kindness.

Leaders have maintained the significant strengths noted at the previous inspection, in particular in terms of pupils' behaviour. Pupils behave well and demonstrate excellent attitudes to learning. They rarely miss a day of school. Pupils told me that they are proud to be at the school and that there is nothing they would change. They said that the best thing about the school is the teachers. Pupils are confident and articulate; their excitement and enthusiasm for learning is palpable. You have developed in them a strong understanding of equality. One pupil told me that 'everyone is a human being, therefore everyone should be treated the same'.

Leaders have successfully addressed all the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. You have provided pupils with an exciting and engaging curriculum, which inspires their imaginations and makes them want to do well.

You have acted on the recommendation from the inspectors to increase opportunities for pupils' first-hand experiences of a range of cultures. Pupils learn about different faiths and beliefs as part of the school's religious education curriculum. They visit a mosque, a gurdwara, a Hindu temple and a synagogue to learn about different religions. Pupils understand that this helps them to appreciate the views of others. You have organised for pupils to exchange messages with pupils in other countries to develop their understanding of different cultures' customs, food and celebrations.

Since the last inspection, pupils' attainment and progress have been at least in line with national expectations. However, pupils' attainment at the end of key stage 2, particularly in mathematics, dipped to below age-related expectations in 2016. You have investigated the reasons for this and identified that it was pupils' underdeveloped reasoning skills that resulted in their disappointing performance in the mathematics test. Leaders have since revised the mathematics curriculum to provide more well-planned and meaningful opportunities for pupils to develop their problem-solving and reasoning skills. You have ensured that this starts in the early years. Leaders provided staff with training in mathematics and this has improved their understanding of how pupils master key mathematical skills. In addition, leaders have introduced a new, whole-school calculation policy and organised an information evening to explain this to parents, so that they can support their child's learning at home.

Evidence in pupils' mathematics books, across all year groups, demonstrates that they are now given more opportunities to discuss and practise these key mathematical skills. The school's assessment information and first-hand inspection evidence indicate that pupils' attainment in mathematics is improving as a result.

You have rightly identified in your school improvement plan that more boys need to reach a good level of development by the end of the early years. To address this, you have put in place additional support to develop boys' speech and language skills and their fine motor skills to improve their handwriting. Leaders have introduced displays in classrooms to capture boys' interest and imagination; for example, a rocket tent in the reading corner. Teachers assess children as soon as they start at school and then regularly throughout the early years. This ensures that timely support can be given if any child is falling behind. Teachers invite parents to add details of their child's achievements at home, such as learning to swim or ride a bike, to a celebration flag in the Reception class. This helps the school to compile a full and accurate picture of each child's learning journey throughout the early years. This is all combining to have a positive impact on boys' progress. We saw together some impressive work in all children's books in the early years and clear evidence of progress.

You have put an appropriate plan in place to improve girls' attainment in reading at the end of key stage 1. Teachers have provided additional support to build on girls' ability to make inference and deductions about texts. Consequently, girls' knowledge and understanding in reading is improving.

## **Safeguarding is effective.**

You are the designated safeguarding leader and you are well supported by two other members of staff, who are also fully trained as safeguarding officers. You all keep your knowledge current through regular, online updates. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that records are detailed and of a high quality.

You have checked that staff, including midday supervisors, have read and understood the very latest government guidance. All staff know what to do if they have any concerns. You showed me some examples of this in practice, where staff had acted swiftly and followed school procedures appropriately. You deal with all concerns promptly and are vigilant in pursuing any necessary further action with external agencies. Staff have had training so they can recognise how to protect pupils from the threat of radicalisation and extremism. You have also ensured that appropriate staff are trained in paediatric first aid.

Pupils said that they felt safe at the school. You have provided opportunities for pupils to learn about how to stay safe online, on their bikes and near roads. You have also taken them on trips to more built-up areas, to improve their confidence in unfamiliar surroundings. Pupils told me how much they enjoyed the recent visit from the police, which helped them to understand how to be good citizens and to avoid anti-social behaviour.

Pupils said that bullying is very rare and were adamant that, if it did happen, it would be dealt with quickly and effectively by teachers. Your school internal bullying logs corroborate this. You are aware that a minority of parents remain concerned about bullying, so you plan to communicate further with parents, to reassure them about the effectiveness of the school's work.

## **Inspection findings**

- You have a clear and accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. You recognise that further improvements are needed in relation to pupils' progress and attainment in mathematics across the school, boys' attainment in the early years, girls' reading in key stage 1 and ensuring that more pupils reach the higher standard in all subjects at the end of key stage 2.
- The governing body provides you with effective support and challenge. They ensure that the pupil premium funding is used effectively to have a positive impact on disadvantaged pupils' attainment. Disadvantaged pupils make good progress against national expectations.
- Leaders have adapted the school's assessment system to reflect recent changes to the curriculum and national performance measures. You carefully track and monitor pupils' performance in science and religious education, as well as in English and mathematics. Teachers work with other schools, moderating pupils' work, to ensure that assessments are accurate.

- You have a clear understanding of how well each pupil is doing and put in place timely and personalised intervention when a pupil is falling behind.
- You have rightly identified that you want to ensure that more pupils reach the higher standards at the end of key stage 2. Teachers now plan opportunities for the most able pupils to explore topics in greater depth, to deepen their knowledge and understanding. We saw evidence of this during the inspection. You are expecting more pupils in the current Year 6 to reach the higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of the year.
- Teachers provide very good support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders ensure that each pupil has an individual plan to support their learning. You involve parents in helping to implement these plans at home. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress from their starting points, as a result of the effective support they are given.
- Teaching assistants work closely with teachers and provide effective support for pupils in lessons. They ask pupils questions that develop their learning.
- You have ensured that pupils have a broad and balanced curriculum, which develops their spiritual, moral, social and cultural skills and prepares them well for secondary school. Pupils have an excellent understanding of British values and can explain how they are linked to their learning in school. Pupils excitedly told me about all the trips that they had been on and the wide range of extra-curricular clubs on offer. Leaders also encourage pupils to set up and run their own clubs to develop their interests and responsibility. For example, a group of pupils run a well-attended story-writing club.
- Teachers encourage pupils to become independent learners. Pupils work collaboratively together and support each other to make progress.
- Additional government funding for primary sport is used effectively. Pupils take part in a wide range of sports, both in school and competitively. Pupils told me that they value this to help them keep fit and healthy.
- Leaders maintain a close focus on teaching and learning to reflect the school's commitment to continuous improvement. Through your links with Forest Way Teaching Alliance, staff have access to a variety of training. This enables staff to keep a continued focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning across the school.
- You have a consistent approach to teaching pupils phonics. For the last three years, pupils' results in the phonics screening check in Year 1 have been in line with national expectations. I heard pupils successfully apply reading techniques such as sounding out unfamiliar words. Pupils read widely and often. You have successfully created a love of reading in pupils. All pupils I spoke with told me that they enjoy reading. They could all name their favourite books and authors. The most able pupils are given books that are suitably challenging. Posters in classrooms list each class's top ten reads and the school's reward system encourages pupils to read widely and often. Pupils' reading journals demonstrate that they read regularly both in school and at home.

- Parents commented on how well the school communicates with them and how happy their children are. One parent echoed the comments of many, and said, 'My child loves going to school. He smiles on the way to school and he is still smiling at the end of the day.'
- Leaders make sure that they meet children and their parents and get to know them before they start school, so that they settle quickly into the Reception class.
- The school's website meets statutory requirements for published information.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils' outcomes in mathematics improve across the school
- more boys achieve a good level of development by the end of the early years foundation stage
- girls' attainment in reading in key stage 1 improves
- more pupils reach the higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6.

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

Yours sincerely

Sally Smith  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I spoke with parents at the start of the day. I met with you, middle leaders, two governors, including the vice-chair of the governing body, and a representative from the local authority. I listened to pupils read and spoke with a group of pupils about their school experience. You and I visited all classes and examined pupils' workbooks. In addition, I scrutinised the school's safeguarding arrangements and records, including the single central register (the school's record of safeguarding recruitment checks on staff). I evaluated the school's documentation in relation to pupils' performance, improvement planning, attendance, minutes of the governing body meetings and monitoring records. I took account of 30 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, and the 28 responses to the Ofsted free text service. There were no responses from staff or pupils to Ofsted's online surveys.

This short inspection focused on:

- whether leaders had addressed the areas for improvement from the last inspection
- how leaders were responding to the decline in pupils' attainment, in particular in mathematics, in 2016
- the actions leaders are taking to improve boys' attainment in the early years and girls' reading in key stage 1
- how leaders are tracking and monitoring key groups of pupils to ensure that they all make good progress from their starting points
- whether safeguarding was still effective across the school and pupils were safe.