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2 March 2017

Mrs Angela Ekers  
Headteacher  
Sutton Upon Derwent Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School  
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Dear Mrs Ekers

### **Short inspection of Sutton Upon Derwent Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 7 February 2017, 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.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection, despite some challenges faced as a result of staffing changes. You have promoted a very strong ethos that has fostered a warm, welcoming and secure atmosphere. Pupils said that they love coming to school and they thrive on the range of enriching opportunities that you provide. They display extremely positive and caring attitudes, try hard in their work and are proud of their contribution to the school community. The large majority of parents appreciate the supportive, nurturing culture that is a hallmark of the school.

At the previous inspection, an area for improvement was for leaders to check more carefully on pupils' progress, involving subject leaders in monitoring the quality of teaching. The need to accelerate writing progress was also an area for improvement. You have used a range of effective strategies to identify where teaching needs to be fine-tuned, and subject leaders have taken an increasing role in this task. Despite some unavoidable changes of staffing that have presented challenges to continuity, you have worked hard to minimise disruption and have ensured that teaching remains good overall. You have taken effective action to broaden the range of writing opportunities. Books that we sampled jointly showed an impressive variety of well-presented written work. You acknowledge that the 2016 key stage 2 writing outcomes were disappointing but you have swiftly responded by introducing a more precise feedback system that clarifies

improvement points for pupils. You have also raised expectations about the teaching and application of grammar and punctuation. Learning is enriched by the good use teachers make of the school grounds. The work to develop sustainable attitudes makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development. More could be done, however, to extend pupils' understanding and skills in physical science.

Your evaluation of teaching quality and the standards that pupils reach provides an accurate view of the school's effectiveness and you know where the key improvement priorities lie. Teachers know what is required because you clarify what you expect to see in their practice. You track the standards attained by pupils over time but accept that a more refined use of assessment information would provide a detailed overview of progress for groups. The expertise drawn from the local cluster of schools, together with advice from the local authority, provides strong support. Consequently, despite imminent leadership changes, the school is well placed to sustain further improvements.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You and other designated staff with responsibility for safeguarding have established and updated secure systems for recruitment vetting and for responding to concerns about possible harm to pupils. By reviewing key child protection policies and procedures and liaising frequently with the local authority, you keep abreast of any new developments. You alert staff to any changes through meetings, briefing newsletters and planned training events. This strong focus on safeguarding ensures that all staff are clear about actions they need to take if they have concerns over pupils' welfare. The school site and building are well maintained, clean and tidy. Governors meet with you regularly to review safeguarding practice. Parents and pupils said they feel the school is safe and secure.

### **Inspection findings**

- You are due to retire at the end of the summer term 2017 and have been working closely with governors and the local authority to ensure there is a smooth transition in leadership. At the time of inspection this work was well under way. You are ensuring that your responsibility for leading English is also seamlessly transferred.
- The governing body fulfils the role of a 'critical friend' well. Governors plan monthly visits with an agreed focus to ensure that they are in tune with the life of the school. They are prepared to ask challenging questions of leaders at committee and full governing body meetings but also appreciate the good quality of information they receive that enables them to take measured decisions. Governors satisfy themselves about the quality of the school's work by making visits to lessons and looking through pupils' books. One governor said, 'We live and breathe school improvement.' Some aspects of the school website, however, require review in order that the information fully meets current government requirements.
- Teachers generally take good account of individual needs and pitch learning tasks at challenging levels. Teachers ensure that the most able pupils have to think

hard to apply calculation skills in solving problems and that pupils extend their reading skills through a range of texts.

- Teachers make good use of the outdoors to extend learning and promote sustainable attitudes in pupils. Children in the early years enjoyed working in the school grounds to act out the 'Three Billy Goats Gruff', and older pupils applied mathematical and geographical skills in their natural studies work. Physical science skills and knowledge are less well developed.
- Children join the early years with knowledge and abilities that are broadly typical for their age. Outcomes over time have been variable and in 2016 the proportion of children reaching a good level of development was below that seen nationally. This was in part due to small cohorts of children disproportionately affecting the overall outcomes and also due to some instability in staffing. However, the progress of the current cohort is much stronger and the school's own assessment indicates that higher proportions of children are meeting age-related expectations. Nevertheless, there is more work to do in accelerating progress through consistent emphasis on developing key skills in reading, writing and number.
- Across key stage 1 pupils continue to make secure progress from their starting points. In 2016, outcomes in reading and writing were above national averages and in line with those seen nationally in mathematics. Although the proportion of Year 1 pupils meeting the phonics reading standard has risen year on year it remained just below the national average in 2016. The teaching of phonics does not always support different pupils' learning needs effectively because some tasks are pitched at too hard or too easy a level.
- Key stage 2 pupils make good progress, particularly in reading and mathematics. At the end of 2016 the proportions of pupils reaching national standards in these subjects were above average. Outcomes for writing were less strong. However, the work of current pupils shows that progress in writing, especially in key stage 2, is gathering pace.
- Work seen in the books of older pupils is of particularly high quality. It is well presented and shows that pupils take a real pride in what they do in all subjects. There is strong evidence to show that teaching is deepening pupils' thinking, as seen in the well-crafted writing in religious education about other faiths and cultures.
- Good relationships abound. Pupils respond quickly and respectfully to their teachers and therefore little learning time is lost. Pupils value the various rewards and take delight in receiving commendations for good efforts and achievements. Older pupils keep a watchful lookout for younger ones. All enjoy coming to school and attendance is above average.
- Reading has a high focus and the most able readers devour books from the wide selection of titles on offer. Parents commented favourably on the provision of reading books, and lower-ability pupils receive extra daily adult support.

## **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- subject leaders develop and embed the use of assessment systems further in order to provide a clearer overview of progress for cohorts and key groups
- more children in the early years make faster progress in reading, writing and number so that greater proportions reach a good level of development
- the teaching of phonics is consistently of a high standard to meet the range of learning needs
- due emphasis is given to the teaching and application of physical science at key stage 2
- the school website meets government requirements in respect of the information it provides.

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

Yours sincerely

James Reid  
**Ofsted Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During this inspection, I met with you, subject leaders and administrative staff. You and I jointly observed teaching and learning in several classes. I also viewed the school's latest assessment records. I scrutinised pupils' work across a range of subjects with you and viewed the learning profiles for the youngest children. I examined documentation including the school improvement plan, the school's own self-assessment record and the local authority's latest external reports, together with information published on the school's website and safeguarding records.

I met with governors, including the chair of governors, and a representative of the local authority. I considered the views of parents, staff and pupils by talking to them informally and by meeting a group of older key stage 2 pupils. I also took account of online responses to surveys, including Parent View.