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Mr E Carlyle  
Executive Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Carlyle

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

Following my visit to the school on 28 March 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 February 2012.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Parents and staff value the school's positive and encouraging culture. Their pride, in being part of the Titchmarsh Primary School community, is striking. Your school's increasing popularity reflects its strong reputation for helping pupils, of all abilities and needs, to succeed. Thirty-four parents left comments about the school on the online survey, Parent View. All of these were full of praise for your school.

Since joining the school in January 2017, you have quickly gained the confidence of staff and parents, and the respect of pupils. You are wisely continuing to work through the leadership and management systems that have served the school successfully in recent years. Nevertheless, while drawing upon this strong practice, you are already using your own skills and experience to bring fresh impetus to the school's drive for continuous improvement. Staff shared with me their enthusiasm for your vision to develop the curriculum and how much they valued the mentoring you provide. They noted, too, the rigour with which you check on the effectiveness of additional support being provided for pupils at risk of underachieving.

High ambition characterises leadership at all levels in the school. The expectation is that pupils will reach standards in reading, writing and mathematics above the national averages. Since the previous inspection, Year 2 pupils have consistently met this ambition. In May 2017, Year 6 pupils at Titchmarsh will be taking the key stage 2 national assessment tests for the first time.

There is compelling evidence in their workbooks that they are being very well prepared for these assessments and their secondary schools.

Your school's successes are not limited to academic outcomes. Pupils speak with excitement about what it means to be a pupil at Titchmarsh. The curriculum ensures that they encounter a wide range of interesting activities to broaden their horizons, including three eagerly anticipated residential visits in key stage 2. The school's faith-based ethos complements the very effective work the school does to promote British values. Both of these aspects of your curriculum are celebrated through inspiring displays in classrooms and around the school. Still more importantly, pupils' attitudes towards one another, and their generosity in helping others less fortunate than themselves, demonstrate their commitment to the school's values.

Your school's unity with another local school, where you are also the executive headteacher, has been an important factor in improving the quality of leadership and teaching throughout Titchmarsh. You and your staff value the opportunities the unity provides for sharing best practice.

You rightly value the role played by the governing body in sustaining and improving the school's effectiveness. I met with five governors and was extremely impressed with their range of expertise. They draw effectively upon this to both support and to challenge you and other school leaders. Governors are scrupulous in carrying out their responsibilities. For example, when making decisions about the use of the school's budget, they weigh up carefully the merits of the different choices open to them. They make regular focused visits to the school, for example to check on the implementation of improvement planning. These visits provide governors with first-hand knowledge of the school. They ensure that governors have an accurate understanding of its strengths and relative weaknesses.

The previous inspection asked the school's leaders to increase the proportion of pupils who attain high standards in mathematics. Past performance information indicates that the issue was initially addressed successfully. However, you recognise that currently not enough of the most able pupils are achieving highly in mathematics. Consequently, this is once again an area for improvement. There is a similar picture in writing. In one year group, not enough pupils are writing at the appropriate standard. In addition, throughout key stage 2, only a few pupils are exceeding the skills expected for their ages, despite their strong performance in key stage 1 writing assessments.

Subject leaders are aware of what needs to be improved in their areas of responsibility. However, their plans, and the overarching school improvement plan, do not give sufficient emphasis to the precise impact the different activities will have on pupils' progress. This hinders the ability of both you and governors to measure and evaluate the success of the school's improvement strategies.

## **Safeguarding is effective.**

School leaders have ensured that all safeguarding procedures are fit for purpose. Staff receive the necessary training on how to keep children safe in education. Those I spoke to are clear about the steps to take if they are concerned about a child. The school keeps appropriate records of any issues that arise, the actions taken and the impact of these actions. The governor with responsibility for safeguarding checks regularly that safeguarding procedures are robust and thorough.

Pupils say that they feel safe in school and that there is very little, some said no, bullying. The curriculum provides them with important information about keeping safe and healthy. Visitors from the public services advise them on road, water and fire safety. The school gives high priority to educating pupils, and their parents, on keeping children safe online. Pupils are fully aware of the dangers of sharing personal information when using digital technology.

Pupils have good opportunities throughout the year to share their views about their time at school. In addition, there are a number of ways in which they can seek support if they are anxious or sad. Crucially, they trust the adults in the school. Pupils know that the school staff will do all that they can to ensure that pupils are safe both inside and outside school.

## **Inspection findings**

- In 2014 and 2015, the proportion of boys attaining a good level of development in the early years was well below that of boys nationally. Their weakest areas of learning were writing, numbers, physical development and making relationships. Since then, the school has improved the opportunities to learn together outdoors and made significant changes in how phonics and mathematics are taught in the Reception class. These three developments have made important contributions to securing better outcomes for boys, particularly in their former areas of weakness. In 2016, the proportion of boys attaining a good level of development was above the national average for boys. This proportion is set to increase again this year. Currently, Reception boys are meeting the early learning goals more successfully than girls.
- In 2014 and 2015, the proportion of pupils meeting the expected standard in the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1 was below the national average. The English subject leader reviewed the school's approach to teaching phonics. She subsequently introduced new phonics teaching materials and reorganised how pupils were grouped for their daily phonics sessions. She ensured that teachers and teaching assistants received high-quality training to equip them with the skills and knowledge required to teach phonics more effectively.
- Crucially, the subject leader made regular checks on how successfully phonics skills were being taught, providing additional support where it was required. In 2016, the proportion of pupils meeting the expected standard in the screening check was well above the national average. Pupils currently in Year 1 are well on

track to repeat this positive outcome.

- In 2016, the proportion of Year 2 pupils who achieved greater depth in mathematics was well below the proportions achieving greater depth in reading and writing. The subject leader for mathematics is addressing this matter and steps have been taken to ensure that provision really challenges the most able pupils. Nevertheless, current information on pupils' attainment indicates that, throughout the school, relatively few pupils are working above age-related expectations in mathematics.
- In 2015 and 2016, boys' attainment in writing at the end of key stage 1 was well below the standards attained by girls in the school. The actions you have taken to address this underachievement have had a positive impact, apart from in one year group where there was unsettled teaching earlier in this school year. However, the teaching of writing in key stage 2 is an area for improvement. Pupils' books show that there are not enough opportunities for pupils to practise and apply their writing skills across the curriculum. This is preventing some of the most able writers, both boys and girls, from reaching the high standards of which they are capable.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- provision enables greater proportions of pupils to reach high standards in mathematics at the end of key stages 1 and 2, and in writing at the end of key stage 2
- when the school improvement plan and subject action plans are reviewed, it is clear how the impact of improvement activities will be measured.

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

Yours sincerely

Anthony O'Malley  
**Ofsted Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During this inspection, I met with you to discuss the school's effectiveness. I also met with other staff and five governors, and I spoke to a representative of the local authority. I met with a group of pupils and talked with others around the school and during lessons. I observed teaching and learning and heard pupils read. I looked at work in pupils' books in all subjects. I examined documents, including those linked to keeping the pupils safe, the school's self-evaluation document and the school improvement plan. I considered 53 responses to Parent View, together with the views of parents gathered as they brought their children to school. In addition, I took account of the views of staff provided through a series of meetings.