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Mrs Diane Riley
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Riley

Short inspection of Hallaton 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 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. In this small school with a big heart, you have ensured that new staff, who have joined as the number of classes has increased, have fully embraced your ethos and high expectations. All teaching staff have leadership responsibilities within school and are responding well to the challenges these pose. Responses to the staff questionnaire show that they all feel proud to work at the school and see you as an inspiration.

You have worked closely with staff to improve the quality of teaching at the school. Experienced and less-experienced staff value the regular feedback on their work that they receive from you and their peers. Teachers want to do their best and regularly avail themselves of the development opportunities provided by your close collaboration with other local schools. The success of actions to improve the teaching of mathematics last year was seen in the outcomes for pupils in Year 6. Pupils became more confident and adept at problem solving and reasoning and reached standards which were above those seen nationally, with all groups of children making rapid progress from their starting points.

Together with staff, governors and the support of parents, you have built upon the strong ethos of the school evident at the time of the previous inspection. The 'admirable' relationships commented on in that report are still evident. Pupils enjoy learning. This is evident in their attitudes in class, their enthusiasm when talking to

me in the playground and in the comments of their parents and carers. Parents and pupils used words such as 'fantastic' and 'incredibly supportive', and one parent said, 'I am so lucky to have my child at this school.' Many parents commented upon the care, concern and leadership shown by you as headteacher.

At the previous inspection, you were asked to ensure the introduction of a more creative, skills-based curriculum in order to challenge and inspire pupils even further. Since this time, a new national curriculum has been introduced and you and your staff have worked hard to implement this and ensure that standards in core subjects are maintained.

The curriculum is broad and balanced and pupils have had a range of enrichment opportunities, such as a visit to the Houses of Parliament, the Royal Ballet and the Japanese Embassy. Since 2014, you have worked with the local museum to contribute to their exhibitions about the Great War. Pupils' involvement has been greatly appreciated by the community. Pupils are also very successful at sporting events.

While we were discussing your curriculum offer, we also looked in books at how well pupils' skills in a range of subject areas are being developed over time. You have comprehensive information about pupils' achievements in reading, writing, mathematics and, more recently, science, but information about how well pupils achieve in other subjects (known as foundation subjects) is not as readily available. You recognise that, as a result, pupils' subject-specific skills, for example historical enquiry, are not always developed to the same high level.

Governors are committed to ensuring the continued success of the school and are working with you to ensure that the school sustains its current class structure. They are very supportive and visit the school regularly to meet leaders and find out what is happening. You provide them with a range of easily understandable information about the school which is then discussed in meetings. I agree with you that more challenge and focused monitoring would be a way for them to support further improvement.

Safeguarding is effective.

School leaders make sure that staff have up-to-date training and so are aware of, and alert to, any possible issues. These are then followed up rigorously by you and your team. A named governor checks that arrangements are effective and that staff are appropriately recruited and vetted before they start work. Leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality.

Parents and pupils agree that pupils are kept safe at school. Although the playground space is small, pupils play and move around it safely. They learn about water safety as a result of their regular swimming lessons, know how to react should they be threatened by fire – showing me how to 'stop, drop and roll' in emergencies – and understand how to cross the road safely. They are helped with

the latter by the Year 6 Junior Road Safety Officers who are on duty at the beginning and end of the day. Pupils of all ages have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe when using computers and mobile devices. Pupils understand what bullying is and say it is very rare. They say that sometimes children fall out but class teachers and the headteacher are always ready to help sort this out if they cannot manage it themselves.

Inspection findings

- During our visits to lessons, we saw children working diligently and showing a range of skills. Younger pupils were using practical resources in mathematics to help them understand addition and subtraction. Some pupils were then applying this learning and working calculations out mentally. Other pupils were applying their learning to extend their sentences using conjunctions, and older pupils were discussing the impact of conflict on the lives of those affected by it. Another group was reflecting on how religious beliefs affect the way we act. Pupils take pride in their work and teachers have high expectations of them.
- One of the key lines of enquiry for this inspection was to look at whether the youngest children make enough progress in writing during their first year in the school. The teacher with responsibility for the early years has recognised how she can support children to improve their writing skills more rapidly and this was seen during the inspection. Children's letter formation has been a focus for teaching and most are now forming their letters accurately and confidently for their age. As a result, they are more willing to have a go and are writing at greater length. The proportion of children who meet and exceed expectations for their age looks set to be above the national average this year.
- We also looked at how well the curriculum was meeting pupils' needs, inspiring them to learn and preparing them for life in modern Britain. You recognise the need for pupils to understand life outside their immediate environment and have established a 'Global School Vision with Village School Values' approach. You have taken advantage of staff and parent links to provide pupils with a wide range of enrichment activities which have enthused and motivated them and which are welcomed by parents. Pupils have started to communicate with others in Spain, India and now France. Opportunities to develop contact with children who live closer and are from different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds have been planned for this year. You recognise the need for all of these wonderful opportunities to be incorporated into the curriculum plan so that they are sustainable over time.
- You have a very clear understanding of the strengths and areas for development of the school and have recognised the need to improve pupils' reading skills so that they make progress similar to that in writing and mathematics. The focus for your work this year has been to develop boys' enjoyment and frequency of reading and their ability to answer more complex questions about what they have read. I discussed reading with a group of boys and they said that they enjoy it as 'it helps you learn things you don't know'. They understand the need to choose challenging texts and feel that there is a suitable range of books in school. Pupils read regularly at home and at school.

- You and your special educational needs coordinator have also developed the system to more effectively identify and track pupils needing extra support with reading. Information so far indicates that your actions are having the necessary positive impact on progress both for boys and for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- leaders track the development of pupils' skills in foundation subjects more closely so that pupils can be challenged to work at the same high level as in English and mathematics
- governors develop their skills further so they can support and challenge the school's work in all areas and thus contribute to further improvement.

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

Joanne Sanchez-Thompson
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this short inspection I met with you, other staff and a group of governors. I also met with a representative of the local authority and spoke with a representative of the diocese. I gathered the views of parents as they dropped their children off at school and looked at the 57 responses to Ofsted's parent survey, including 44 written comments. I also scrutinised the 12 responses from staff who took part in Ofsted's staff survey. The views of pupils were gathered in the playground and from my meeting with a group of pupils from Years 1 to 6. You joined me in visits to lessons and so I was able to find out more about how you are working with staff to effect improvements. I listened to a small number of pupils read, checked on safeguarding information, including talking to staff, looked at pupils' work in their books and scrutinised your assessment information.