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Mrs Emma Pomfret  
Headteacher  
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Orton  
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Cumbria  
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Dear Mrs Pomfret

### **Short inspection of Orton Church of England 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 2013.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since taking up the role of headteacher in September 2016, you have made an excellent start. You have quickly gained the trust and respect of children, parents and staff. You and your governing body have created an environment, based on the school's Christian values, where pupils can feel safe and thrive, both academically and in their personal development. There is a strong sense of being part of a 'family' at Orton. This has been generated by you and your team's dedication to pupils, and a commitment to create a caring and nurturing whole-school community.

The very large majority of parents who spoke to me, or responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, are extremely positive about the school and would recommend it to others. Some parents particularly appreciate that you and your staff are 'approachable' and say that their children 'love school'.

All staff who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire are proud to be part of Orton, and say that the school is led very effectively. They feel fairly treated and well supported. Staff share your vision and aspirations for the school and there is a strong sense of team-working to drive continued improvement.

I am aware that due to the small number of pupils who took the national tests at

the end of key stages, care must be taken when making comparisons with nationally published information. In 2016, all children who could reach a good level of development at the end of Reception did so, as did Year 1 pupils who met the expected standard in the national phonics screening check. At the end of key stages 1 and 2, an above-average proportion of pupils reached the expected standard in reading and writing, and in grammar, punctuation and spelling. In mathematics at the end of both key stages, pupils' outcomes were comparable to national averages. In-year checks on progress across school and in pupils' books confirm that they make good progress at the end of each key stage.

The proportion of key stages 1 and 2 pupils achieving greater depth or higher standards in English and mathematics was comparable to or below national averages. You are mindful that these proportions need to improve further. The actions you have put in place are already leading to improvement in these areas and more pupils are now on track to achieve at these higher standards.

At the previous inspection, inspectors identified a need to provide pupils with opportunities to use and develop their writing skills in other subjects as well as in English. You were also asked to offer pupils learning opportunities to work things out for themselves, and to make sure that teachers explain tasks clearly. Finally, you were asked to involve middle leaders more in evaluating the quality of teaching and learning. Leaders have ensured that improvements have taken place.

Writing has a high profile. The whole school, including the early years, has a consistent approach and expectation in writing. Pupils are regularly offered opportunities to write in various ways, often using reading or picture book texts as a stimulus to write in other subjects such as science and geography. For example, in the early years, children were extremely enthusiastic about engaging in a range of activities related to the book 'Lost and found' by Oliver Jeffers. They constructed boats and tested them to see if they would float. Elsewhere in the school, pupils used learning about the rainforest as a stimulus for extended pieces of writing, vividly evoking the sights and sounds of this environment.

Lessons are well presented. They are explained clearly and pupils know precisely what they need to do to achieve within the activities they are set. Consequently, pupils are self-assured in their learning and explain what they are doing confidently. Pupils, particularly in Years 5 and 6, are challenged to use their knowledge and skills to solve problems and think things out for themselves. In other parts of the school, this aspect is not as strong, particularly in mathematics.

You have worked hard, in a short time, to revise middle leadership roles. Middle leaders talk with enthusiasm and growing confidence about their responsibilities and

the opportunities that they have had for training and networking with other local schools. They have had the opportunity to audit their subject areas and write improvement plans. In a few subjects, middle leaders have had a chance to look for consistency and progress in pupils' books across school. I agree with you that continuing to learn from practice in other schools will support the next stage of your school's improvement journey.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You and your team have further improved the safety and security of the school. You view safeguarding as everyone's responsibility. Safeguarding records are kept rigorously, are detailed and are reviewed regularly to ensure that they meet statutory requirements. Appropriate training for staff and governors is undertaken and up to date, including that related to keeping pupils safe from radicalisation and extremism. Your vigilance around the care and support of vulnerable pupils is of a high standard. Leaders have effective relationships with other agencies and are persistent in situations where vulnerable pupils need extra support or advocacy.

Pupils say they feel very safe and well cared for in school. They are confident that adults will help them if needed. Pupils explained the difference between bullying and 'falling out'. They felt instances were very rare and that adults deal with any situations quickly. Parents share this view. Pupils of all ages talk with knowledge about the ways they can stay safe in a range of situations, including personally and online. The very large majority of parents feel that you and the staff keep their children safe and well looked after.

### **Inspection findings**

- It is clear from my brief time with you that you have quickly got to know your school well. You have an accurate, reflective and honest view of its strengths and priorities. You have high expectations regarding the further improvements the school needs to make. The governing body is very supportive, challenges you appropriately and makes a positive contribution toward moving the school forward. Consequently, there is very good capacity to improve the school further.
- Attendance is above the national average and has been for some years. In the past, the attendance of a very small number of pupils was not as good as it could have been. However, this has now been addressed. Attendance is a high priority for the school and good attendance is celebrated. You have good-quality systems for monitoring attendance and have been successful in reducing persistent absence.
- You have correctly identified the need to further improve the achievement of pupils in mathematics across the school, and to increase the proportion of pupils

achieving greater depth or higher standards in English and mathematics. To this end, you have taken decisive action. For example, you have refined the assessment information that you gather so that you can regularly check the individual progress of pupils. You are using this information effectively with class teachers to precisely pinpoint pupils' needs and next steps. You have also increased the range of activities available in lessons to extend pupils in their thinking and skills. In Years 5 and 6, pupils use these activities very effectively to set their own difficulty levels and push themselves further at every opportunity. However, I agree with you that this practice is less well established in the rest of school.

- You are currently introducing a new approach to teaching mathematics. As well as increasing pupils' proficiency at mathematical recall, you recognise the need to greatly increase the opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical skills and knowledge to problem solving. You intend to support this development by offering your staff further chances to learn from excellent teaching and learning practice in other schools.
- Pupils have very good attitudes to learning and are very proud of their school. Pupils' personal development, coupled with the school's strong Christian values, pervades all that the school does. Pupils demonstrate values such as kindness, respect and love through their behaviour and actions toward each other. For example, older pupils show a high level of care and nurture for younger ones when they play together in the playground and sit in their 'family' groups at lunchtime. Pupils typically say, 'We are one big family', 'We know and care about everyone' and 'If someone falls over, we are there to help.'
- The school is located in a relatively remote rural area. However, you and your staff have worked hard to ensure that all pupils benefit from a wide range of experiences and are familiar with global issues that relate to people both locally and communities around the world. In your recent work about fair trade and in aid of Red Nose Day, you have fostered a strong sense of charity, respect and tolerance for diversity, both within modern Britain and in other countries. As pupils say, 'We accept difference here and we welcome everyone.'

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

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- Middle-ability and the most able pupils are challenged and extended in lessons, so more achieve greater depth and higher standards
- pupils are offered more opportunities to apply mathematical skills to solve problems and think more deeply about their work
- they continue to offer teachers opportunities to share and learn from best practice in middle leadership and in teaching and learning.

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

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

Yours sincerely

Sue Eastwood  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During this inspection, I met with you and with middle leaders. I also met with the person responsible for maintaining the single central record for safeguarding. I met with four governors, including the chair of the governing body, and I spoke on the telephone to a representative of Cumbria local authority. We visited lessons and I scrutinised pupils' work. I took account of the 27 responses from parents to Parent View, as well as the views of seven parents who talked with me before the school day. I took account of the eight responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and spoke to staff during the day. I also met with a group of pupils. I observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around school. I looked at school documents including information about pupils' achievement, your school self-evaluation, the school improvement plan, behaviour and incident logs, and documents relating to safeguarding.