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15 June 2017

Ruth Baugh
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Baugh

Short inspection of White Notley Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 23 May 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 April 2013.

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 been the headteacher since September 2015. You accurately analysed some areas that needed improvement and addressed these with urgency and determination. Teachers who needed additional help speak positively about a steeliness behind your friendliness and approachability. You have worked hard to take staff with you in raising the quality of teaching in the school. Staff, pupils and parents responding to Ofsted's online questionnaires are overwhelmingly positive. A typical comment from a parent is, 'White Notley is an amazing school with an amazing head and staff.' Another parent emphasises the rounded approach to education that your school provides, 'Not only is my child being taught very well and made to feel safe but the way the school encourages and teaches social interaction, social values and care for each other is truly amazing. The results are amazingly confident, resilient and caring young people ready to face the next stage of their lives.'

You were disappointed with the 2016 national key stage 2 test results because these revealed that pupils did not make good enough progress from key stage 1. These results are partly because of changes in staffing and the time it had taken to understand the new national curriculum requirements. Assessment of current pupils' progress shows that the actions you have taken to bring about improvements are now bearing fruit.

You have sought and been provided with effective external support from the diocese and the local authority. You are acutely aware of the advantages and disadvantages of being a small school. Therefore, you work effectively with other local schools to challenge and support one another and to share best practice, for example using a practitioner from another local school to mentor one of your teachers. You have successfully maintained the 'community' atmosphere of the village school and the personal development, well-being and behaviour strengths that were found to be outstanding at the previous inspection. As another parent summed it up, 'Great school that is trying to make the right improvements with regard to pupil performance. They are clear about improvements that need to be made.'

Safeguarding is effective.

Pupils say they feel safe and all staff agree. The school meets all statutory requirements related to safeguarding. Governors take safeguarding very seriously. The chair of governors makes checks on the single central record to ensure that this meets requirements. The governor with particular safeguarding responsibilities brings professional expertise to the role. Most importantly, the pupils are very well known to staff, resulting in a culture where pupils' well-being is the top concern for all employed at the school. All of the 43 parents responding to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, agree that their child feels safe at school and almost all agree that their child is well looked after.

Inspection findings

- In 2016, some pupils at the end of Year 6 did not do well enough, especially in writing, but also to some extent in mathematics. Leaders are clear about the reasons for this and have ensured that pupils are now better prepared. Current Year 6 pupils who have recently taken national tests said that they completed the questions in time and that the practise beforehand helped them to feel prepared. This is in contrast to pupils' level of preparation for last year's tests.
- Given the published information about the 2016 national tests, I needed to check whether pupils are making enough progress between key stages 1 and 2. I found that over the last two academic years leaders have introduced enhanced systems for monitoring the progress of pupils and ensure that teachers act on this information to accelerate pupils' progress. These systems have had much more impact this year than last. The school's monitoring information, together with evidence from pupils' books and our visits to classrooms, shows that particularly in English and mathematics, but also across a range of subjects, pupils of different abilities are making good progress.
- The published information on pupils' performance shows that last year the proportion of pupils meeting national expectations in the Year 1 phonics screening was below average, but by the end of Year 2 all pupils had reached the expected standard. Teachers' assessments at the end of key stage 1 show that pupils' reading was above average. The small number of pupils in the year

groups means that each pupil can make a big difference to national comparisons.

- Reading is taught skilfully and pupils enjoy working with teachers and teaching assistants on phonics. There has been a strong emphasis on the development of literacy skills. Leaders have set the challenge of no pupil leaving with reading ability below that expected for their age. Inspection evidence confirms that this aim is rapidly being accomplished.
- I wanted to discover why outcomes for key stage 1 were better than those at key stage 2 last year. Leaders are confident that key stage 1 assessments are accurate. Teachers moderate their assessments with other schools in the area. The assessment leader brings her knowledge and experience as a national moderator to the school's assessment of pupils' learning. Leaders say that pupils in Years 3, 2 and 1 have the reading and spelling skills that, relative to their age, are better than older pupils because the younger pupils have had a more consistent, high-quality approach to the teaching of phonics.
- The progress of the most able pupils was identified as an area for improvement at the previous inspection and was highlighted by the school's outcomes in the 2016 national key stage 2 tests. The new leadership team has rightly identified this as a key area to address. The school now has a strong emphasis on promoting the achievement of the most able pupils. The school is an active participant in the local gifted and talented initiative, running master classes for the hub. This extends to key stage 1, where additional activities for pupils include a 'masterchef' competition, a music composition competition and science activities.
- 'Express' mathematics groups have been set up for most-able mathematicians in Years 3 to 6 to promote extra challenge and deep-thinking time. A reading challenge group has been set up to support most-able pupils in Year 5 and 6 to achieve greater depth. Whole-school work has been undertaken on planning to ensure that pupils of different abilities are challenged. As a result, the school's monitoring information shows that a larger proportion of pupils are likely to achieve the highest outcomes in national tests. Despite this good work, teachers' use of assessment information and the tasks they set in order to accelerate the progress of the most able pupils in lessons do not always meet leaders' expectations.
- Finally, the school's website suggested that the curriculum would be a strength of the school. The school has a curriculum that is broad and rich. On the day of the visit, Year 5 and 6 pupils were engaged in an enterprise activity where teams were competing with one another to produce and sell products to raise money for charity. Through this, pupils were learning about costs, revenue and profit as well as enterprising skills such as teamwork. Pupils were enjoying applying mathematics skills to financial decisions. Pupils told the inspector that they enjoy raising money for charity and learning about the way people live in very different economic circumstances. They learn about this through the school's link with a school in Kenya. The two schools work on projects together. Pupils are able to explore the similarities and differences, for example in farming.
- Leaders agree that while there is a broad and balanced curriculum, teachers do not treat foundation subjects with the same rigour as English and mathematics.

Leaders are developing assessment systems to monitor pupils' progress across foundation subjects, but the application of the assessment policy is less evident in foundation subjects.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the rigour in assessment found in English and mathematics is applied to other subjects
- the most able pupils have work that more frequently leads to accelerating their progress in lessons.

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

Yours sincerely

Adrian Lyons
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, teachers and other staff, members of the governing body, and a group of pupils. I spoke to representatives of the diocese and the local authority on the telephone. Together we visited each class to observe teaching, including listening to children reading in the early years. We looked at pupils' books together to see progress in pupils' work across a range of subjects. I observed pupils around the school and in the playground. We reviewed school documents about self-evaluation, development planning and safeguarding, including the single central record. We also considered the 43 responses to the Ofsted questionnaire from parents, 36 from pupils and 18 responses from staff.