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Mrs C Galletly
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Dear Mrs Galletly

Short inspection of Mundford Church of England Primary Academy

Following my visit to the school on 21 September 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 predecessor school was judged to be good in March 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the school's good quality of education. Since the inspection of the predecessor school, the school has formed the Churchside Federation with another local primary school. The federation shares a local governing body. You are executive headteacher of both schools and divide your time between them. The school has also become an academy as part of the Diocese of Norwich Education Academies Trust, which includes some 30 primary schools.

Drawing on strengths across both schools, Mundford has an effective team of leaders. You work very closely with the partner school, sharing resources and best practice. The heads of school from both sites work together with you and share responsibilities. Thus, the head of school at Mundford oversees assessment for the federation and the head of school at the partner school oversees the curriculum. Middle leaders from both schools work and plan together, and pupils said how much they enjoy visiting the partner school and hosting pupils from that school at Mundford.

The impact of the federation is, therefore, very positive and means that Mundford is an outward-looking school, not only working closely with the partner school, but also with other schools in the trust. This brings the school's strapline, 'Encouraging excellence in everyone', alive. Leaders are quick to tackle weaknesses, for example in teaching. You have acted swiftly to ensure that the high standards of teaching you expect are maintained. Leaders and the local governing body do not shy away

from taking difficult decisions in the interests of children's education.

The school has good systems for checking its work. This means that your evaluation of the school's effectiveness is accurate. Your systematic and rigorous approach means that all staff receive regular feedback on their performance and are helped to improve on their previous best. For example, you have identified that, sometimes, the most able pupils are not challenged sufficiently well. The school's curriculum is well designed and tailored to meet the needs of its pupils. Nonetheless, you have noticed that in some subjects, especially science and history, the most able pupils are at times given the same work to do as other pupils and do not have the chance to go deeper in their thinking. This means that some pupils do not achieve as well as they should in these subjects.

The school has adapted well to becoming an academy and enjoys a productive and creative relationship with the trust. Since the partner school was inspected, the trust has ensured that roles and responsibilities between trustees and the local governing body are clearly defined and function well. The trust's officers provide you with helpful support and challenge, and high-quality training. They enable the school's unique character to flourish while taking on board the advantages of belonging to a wider family of schools.

Pupils make good progress over time and are well prepared for secondary school. The school is an attractive place in which to learn. It has a calm and purposeful atmosphere, with many interesting and informative displays that engage pupils and celebrate their achievements. The grounds are extensive and very well maintained. All parents who spoke to me were very positive about the school and their children's education. Parents of children of different ages all said how pleased they were with their children's progress and the friendliness of staff. They said that staff go out of their way to let them know how their children are doing, especially if their children have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Pupils are friendly, polite, well behaved and enjoy learning. They know the values of the school very well. These are 'honesty, respect and kindness'. They understand how these values relate to fundamental British values. Pupils live out these values in their daily lives. They show respect for others and are tolerant of differences, learning about other cultures and knowing that there are different family groups.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders ensure that procedures are rigorous and that all children are kept safe. They keep very careful records of any concerns and work well with outside agencies, such as social services and the police. All staff have had the necessary training. Members of staff could explain the impact this has had and were confident in identifying pupils who may be at risk and in following the correct procedures. A test for all members of staff helps them retain their knowledge. The single central record meets all requirements and is up to date. As part of a county initiative, the school has done some innovative work with the police on Operation Encompass, an approach to working with vulnerable families. Staff have had training in the

'Prevent' duty, which makes them aware of the threat of extremism or radicalisation. Pupils learn about e-safety and have a good understanding of how to stay safe when using computers. Staff and governors have had training in safer recruitment and ensure that only appropriate people are employed to work with children.

Inspection findings

- In order to ensure that the school remains good, I identified a number of key lines of enquiry that were agreed at our initial meeting. First of all, we considered the progress and attainment of pupils in mathematics at key stage 2.
- Leaders acted swiftly following disappointing outcomes in mathematics in 2016. They identified that pupils' reasoning skills were not strong enough across the school. They immediately trained staff in improving pupils' reasoning skills and checked closely that teachers were implementing the new approaches. These included more probing questioning and encouraging pupils to reflect on their learning. They also restructured the curriculum to ensure that pupils had plenty of opportunity to use practical apparatus while learning new concepts. Teachers identified individuals who had gaps in their understanding and provided support to enable them to catch up. Best practice was also shared across the partner schools.
- As a result of these changes, pupils' attainment and progress improved considerably by the end of Year 6 in 2017. Standards were above average at both the expected standard and at greater depth, and progress improved from being well below average to average overall. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics at key stage 1 was also above average, despite staff absence during the autumn term. The learning improved rapidly from January onwards, but one consequence of having to make up for lost time meant that pupils did not reach greater depth. Across the school, teaching in mathematics improved and attainment increased.
- The second line of enquiry concerned disadvantaged pupils. This was because this group of pupils did not do as well as other pupils in national tests in 2016.
- Disadvantaged children often join the school with skills and abilities below other children, especially in their grasp of language. They are receiving a rich education in the early years, with many opportunities to develop their literacy skills both indoors and outside. As a result, this deficit diminishes as children move into key stage 1.
- Across the school, there are no differences between the achievement of these pupils and the others in writing and mathematics. In the past year, therefore, leaders have focused on supporting disadvantaged pupils in their reading. Only a few pupils are not now making good progress in reading. Over half the disadvantaged pupils across the school made rapid progress in reading, writing and mathematics in 2017. This was because leaders tracked how well they were doing every half term and held teachers to account for their performance. They checked the use of the pupil premium funding very closely to ensure that it represented good value for money.

- There were too few disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 in 2017 to comment on their progress and attainment without identifying them.
- The final key line of enquiry related to attendance. Attendance was below average in 2016, especially for pupils known to be entitled to free school meals. Exactly the same leadership team oversees above average attendance at the partner school. At Mundford, however, some parents believe they are entitled to take their children out of school on holiday. This means that unauthorised absence is relatively high, because the school will not condone such behaviour.
- Leaders devote much time and energy to working with families to ensure that their children attend school regularly. However, due to a very small minority of parents who do not follow the school's guidelines, the rate of attendance, while increasing, is doing so only slowly and remains below average overall.
- The school uses all the available legal measures to make clear to parents that there are consequences for truancy. It has also introduced a rewards system to recognise the good attendance of the majority of its pupils. Some of these positive approaches are relatively new and have not had a full impact yet.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- a greater proportion of pupils reach greater depth in attainment, through making sure that the most able pupils are sufficiently challenged, especially in subjects such as science and history
- work with families continues to impress upon them the importance of regular attendance and avoiding term-time holidays.

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

Yours sincerely

Nick Butt
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, other school leaders, the chair of the local governing body, the chief executive of the trust and the improvement director, administrative staff and pupils. Short visits were made to all classrooms where books were scrutinised. A selection of books saved from last year was also considered. A range of documents, policies and assessment information was examined. I considered the responses of 27 parents to the Ofsted questionnaire, Parent View. In addition, I spoke to parents in the playground about their views of the school.