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10 November 2017

Mrs Stella Belgrove
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Belgrove

Short inspection of Hook Norton Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 31 October 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 and the governors have very successfully steered the school through a period of significant change and growth. Since the last inspection, there has been a major building programme and the school's capacity has increased from 30 pupils in each year group to 45. Throughout these changes, you have ensured that standards have continued to rise and kept everyone in the school focused on pupils' learning. You have strengthened and enriched the curriculum and have continued to develop the school's excellent work with schools in other countries. You and the governors are not complacent and are united in your ambition for every pupil to achieve well and thrive at Hook Norton.

There is a strong climate for learning throughout the school. Children get off to a flying start in the early years and have a happy, successful start to school. Pupils enjoy coming to school and sparkle with enthusiasm when they talk about the topics they learn about. Pupils particularly enjoy their many exciting visits and extra clubs and they say that their teachers make learning fun and interesting. The school is a hive of industry. Pupils readily commit to learning and quickly become engrossed in their activities. Teaching is lively and engaging. Teachers successfully harness pupils' natural curiosity and thirst for learning. Pupils are very well behaved and show kindness and respect towards each other, demonstrating the school's very

strong values. Older pupils particularly enjoy the extra responsibility of helping younger pupils and acting as 'play leaders' during breaktime. Parents are very supportive of the school and speak warmly about how much their children enjoy coming to school. As one parent commented, 'My children are thriving at this happy, welcoming school that's genuinely at the heart of the community.'

You have maintained the strengths identified at the last inspection. Pupils achieve well and attainment at the end of the foundation stage and key stages 1 and 2 is well above the national average. In 2017, the proportion of pupils in key stage 1 who achieved a greater depth of learning in reading was well above the national average. The most able pupils also achieved well at the end of key stage 2 and a higher than average proportion of pupils attained the higher standard in reading, writing and mathematics. You have rightly identified that few of the most able boys achieved a greater depth of learning in their writing in key stage 2, and have made this a focus for improvement this year. Disadvantaged pupils make good progress, although currently very few of these pupils are working at the higher standard.

You have successfully addressed the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Teaching has continued to improve and teachers benefit from working within supportive, well-led teams, enabling them to share good practice and ensure consistency of approach. You have reshaped the mathematics curriculum and adapted teaching approaches so that pupils have more opportunities to apply their mathematical skills. You have also made sure that assessments of pupils' learning are accurate by, for example, moderating teachers' judgements with colleagues from other schools. You and the governors systematically review all aspects of the school and continually plan for further improvements. This year, you are focusing on strengthening even further pupils' learning in the foundation subjects. This is because in some foundation subjects you recognise that the most able pupils are not yet achieving as highly as they do in English and mathematics.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and the governors have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are of good quality. You and other members of staff know pupils very well and are alert to any changes in their demeanour which may be a concern. You act promptly to address any issues and, where appropriate, refer these to other agencies. Regular training and updates mean that staff are knowledgeable about safeguarding procedures and know just what to do if they have any concerns. You work effectively with other agencies to help keep pupils safe and make sure that families receive the support they need. Governors make regular checks on safeguarding arrangements, talking with staff and pupils and making sure that procedures are consistent and robust. Pupils say they feel safe at school and are very confident that if they ever have a worry, they can speak to an adult. As one pupil commented, 'The teachers listen to us.' Staff and the vast majority of parents agree that pupils at Hook Norton are safe.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection, we agreed to focus on particular aspects of the school's work: the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements; how well boys are achieving in English; how well leaders are using the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils, particularly the most able, to enable these pupils to achieve well; how effectively leaders are improving the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities; and how well the curriculum meets pupils' needs and interests and prepares them for life in modern Britain.
- In 2016, at the end of key stage 1, boys did not achieve as well as girls in reading and writing and the proportion of boys who achieved the expected standard was below the national average. However, this cohort was unusually small and therefore not comparable with previous years. In 2017, boys achieved well and the proportion who achieved the expected standard was well above the national average in all subjects at end of key stages 1 and 2. The most able boys also achieved well in all subjects at key stage 1 and in reading and mathematics at key stage 2. However, few boys achieved a greater depth of learning in writing at the end of key stage 2.
- Current boys are making good progress and achieving well. In our visits to classrooms, we could see how all pupils were being challenged to write well. Stimulating contexts inspire pupils to write and teachers capitalise on pupils' interest in topical themes, choosing contexts carefully to appeal to both boys and girls. For example, a short film clip sparked pupils' imagination and was used to very good effect to stimulate pupils' descriptive writing. As a result, one boy was inspired to write a description of an approaching space ship, 'Through the black screen, a prowling predator pierced the ebony twilight.'
- When looking at pupils' books we saw many examples of boys' high-quality writing and evidence of the good progress they are making in their English skills. While you have very successfully addressed this aspect of boys' achievement, you are sensibly continuing to focus on this over the coming year so that improvements are sustained.
- You make effective use of the additional funds the school receives to support disadvantaged pupils. You approach each pupil as an individual and make sure that just the right support is there to enable them to thrive. You provide some individual support for pupils in school and additional resources have been purchased to support pupils' reading at home. You have created individual profile books, which carefully track disadvantaged pupils' progress and attainment. This means that you can spot very quickly if any pupils are at risk of falling behind. While disadvantaged pupils are making good progress, there remains a gap between their attainment and the attainment of other pupils. You also acknowledge that at present, very few disadvantaged pupils are currently working at a greater depth of learning.
- Your robust approach to improving the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has been effective. You promptly and diligently follow up any absences and also reward and celebrate pupils' good attendance. The breakfast club and your good work

and support for families has led to improved rates of attendance for the few pupils who previously did not attend well.

- The stimulating curriculum is a strength of the school. Teachers plan plentiful opportunities for pupils to learn across a broad range of subjects. Teachers typically start new topics with a thought-provoking 'big question' to motivate pupils and ignite their curiosity. Questions such as 'Would a lion prefer to live in Kenya or England?' get pupils thinking and promote discussion about the kind of habitats animals like and what it would be like to be in Kenya. Overall, pupils learn well and have many opportunities to apply their writing skills across a wide range of different subjects. However, when reviewing pupils' work and from our visits to classrooms, we agreed that the more able pupils are not yet developing a greater depth of learning in some foundation subjects.
- The school has well-established links with a school in Sweden and older pupils benefit greatly by reciprocal visits and regular contact with their partner school. Pupils' learning about other cultures, beliefs and traditions is enhanced through their religious education. For example, when learning about the Hindu festival of Diwali, younger pupils made Rangoli patterns and created their own Indian dances. Teachers use every opportunity to include a 'global' dimension in pupils' work such as learning about fair trade when using ingredients and materials from other parts of the world.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the school continues the good work to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils, so that the gap in achievement between these pupils and other pupils continues to diminish, and more disadvantaged pupils achieve a greater depth of learning
- the most able pupils have opportunities to develop a greater depth of learning in foundation subjects and achieve as well as they do in English and mathematics.

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

Yours sincerely

Sue Cox
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Together, we visited all classes to look at learning and talk to pupils about their work. I met with you to discuss the school's self-evaluation and to agree our key lines of enquiry for this inspection. We also met to review safeguarding arrangements. I held a meeting with six members of the governing body and had a short telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority. I spoke to pupils informally during the day and I met with a group of pupils from key stages 1 and 2. I also took into account pupils' views from the 72 responses to the Ofsted online pupil survey. I reviewed a wide range of school documents, including the pre-employment checks on the suitability of staff to work with children and safeguarding information, policies and documents. I considered the views of parents through the 74 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and the responses of staff from the 13 members of staff who completed the Ofsted staff questionnaire. I also met parents on the playground at the start of the school day.