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Mrs Beverley Pawson  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Pawson

### **Short inspection of Sand Hutton Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 14 November 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 January 2013.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. In the short time since your appointment in September 2017 as the executive headteacher of the two schools in the federation, you have quickly identified the strengths of the school and the areas that most need improvement. You are mindful of building on the existing strengths of the school, including the family ethos and community involvement, while being focused on refining systems and teaching to improve outcomes for pupils.

Pupils are proud of their school and describe kindness and friendship as being 'the best bits'. They value the care and support they are given by adults and say that they are quietly given helpful reminders if their generally very good behaviour ever slips. They rise to the positions of responsibility they are given. For example, library monitors are looking at ways to improve the information given to pupils about how to use the library effectively. Other pupils run a snack stall, researching best value, and ordering and selling the snacks to other pupils each day. Parents say that the community ethos within the school and the care provided by adults are strengths.

Leaders have used the recent changes in staffing as an opportunity to develop a stronger, shared leadership approach to improvement. New leaders for English, mathematics and early years are enthusiastic in their ambition for improving pupils' outcomes. They have made a good start in getting to understand the strengths and weaknesses of their areas of responsibility. You and governors have identified that

the support given to these new leaders will be essential in ensuring that they are able to fully support and direct teachers in improving the progress pupils make.

Although the school is much smaller than the average-sized primary school, partnerships supporting school improvement are wide and varied. Working together with Warthill Church of England (CE) Primary School, the other school in the federation, is part of everyday school life. Staff development, planning, training, leadership and some aspects of teaching are shared across the schools. Supportive dialogue with, and direction from, the local authority and diocese contribute positively to school improvement. The school improvement adviser has an accurate view of the school's priorities. Her feedback identifies clear actions to take and supports governors in checking on the impact of leaders' work. Leaders use their good connections with the Howardian Small Schools Alliance and the Pathfinder Teaching School Alliance to share good ideas and support staff's professional development.

At the last inspection, leaders were asked to improve leadership and management by ensuring that all leaders have a good understanding of the progress made by all pupils across the school, especially in English and mathematics. While there are systems in place, they are not recorded in a way that makes it clear to see the progress that all pupils are making, across the year, and from their starting points. Leaders, including governors, have rightly identified this as a key area for improvement. Leaders have a good understanding of the greater detail they intend this system to have. They know that they need to continue to support teachers in making accurate assessments that will feed into this system.

Improving pupils' learning and progress in writing was a second area that leaders were tasked with improving. Provisional outcomes at the end of key stage 2 in 2017 show considerable improvement in the proportion of pupils reaching the expected and higher standards in writing. These outcomes are favourable with national averages. However, standards across other year groups in school show variation, with outcomes at the end of key stage 1 continuing to lie below national averages. Pupils' current work shows the positive impact of teachers' improved direction to pupils of the next steps they need to take. For example, younger pupils' books clearly demonstrate the teacher's non-negotiable expectations, in terms of the correct spelling of common words and punctuation. For all pupils across the school, teachers' verbal and written direction is having an impact on the improvements pupils are making in their subsequent work. Older pupils have clear direction in ensuring that their spelling and grammar are accurate, but sometimes they do not have enough support in developing their skills for particular styles of writing. The modelling of writing styles, and opportunities to build their skills and then apply them to longer pieces of writing, are not always of a high enough profile to fully support and challenge pupils, particularly those of lower and higher ability.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders have recently further improved the effective safeguarding systems in place. For example, leaders have implemented an electronic system to record and check

adults' concerns. This is well understood by staff. Leaders say that this has given them a much better way of accessing and monitoring information, and supports them in taking swift and appropriate action. Records are of high quality and links with other agencies are clearly identified. In addition, leaders carefully consider risk assessments, so that decisive actions are taken to minimise any potential risks.

Staff training is up to date and everyone understands what to do if they have a concern. Governors check safeguarding arrangements carefully.

Pupils say that they feel safe and adults make sure that they are safe. Teaching, in the classroom and in assemblies, encourages pupils to learn about how to take care of themselves and others. Pupils have a strong sense of care and respect for each other. During my visit, pupils were working on the themes of kindness and respect. Within this, specific tasks were set with a focus on relationships. For example, the youngest children were sharing thoughtful ideas about what they could do to make the sad knight happy.

### **Inspection findings**

- I was interested to find out more about children's skills on entry to Reception, and the progress they make through early years. The proportion of children reaching a good level of development at the end of Reception sits stubbornly below the national averages. Work has taken place to improve the opportunities to develop key areas of learning in early years. The new early years leader now has a very good understanding of children's skills on entry to school, where any gaps lie, and how to address these. For example, children's weaker skills in their knowledge and understanding of the world are being well addressed by a variety of activities in school and out in the local community. Good communication within the class 1 team is ensuring that there are consistently high expectations of children, effective adult questioning to support children in developing their learning, and a clear understanding of what each child needs to do next.
- Developing children's basic skills is high on the agenda as soon as they start school. On the day of the inspection, a very well-organised outdoor activity was enticing all the Reception children to mix up potions for the sad knight in the story and write about what it was for. Children worked independently to create their potion, describing the colours they were mixing and what the potion would do. One child, when asked to describe his potion, said, 'It was pink. Now it is purple because I added more blue.' Children were recording their ideas confidently and eagerly by writing on a giant potion bottle. One boy said, 'It will make you smile, because it is magic.'
- Developing pupils' reasoning skills in mathematics has been a key priority for improvement over the last year. The impact of the previous leaders' direction can be seen in the confidence pupils have developed in applying their mathematical skills to problems. Their work shows frequent opportunities to explain their reasoning. Leaders know that this work needs to continue to be high profile, to further deepen pupils' learning and develop more rapid recall of number facts.
- Improvements in teachers' knowledge and direction to pupils in phonics are

having a positive impact on phonics and reading outcomes. A strong emphasis on reading for pleasure and enjoyment comes through when speaking to pupils. Careful checks on where pupils did not perform as well in tests at the end of the last academic year have led to better support for pupils in developing their inference and deduction skills.

- Leaders' aim to ensure that pupils have access to a curriculum that enthuses them to improve their skills across different subjects is apparent around school. A recent example is the whole-school activities based on the book, 'Tuesday', which started with pupils arriving at school to find a 'crime scene' in their hall. Displays, photographs, pupils' work and discussions with them give a taste of the high engagement and purposeful learning taking place across all age groups, for example in art, poetry and report writing. Particularly notable are the deduction skills pupils used, linking closely with their work in reading comprehension. Most pupils appreciate the way teachers organise homework, with a choice of activities to develop their learning in basic skills and the wider curriculum.
- Governors bring clear dedication and varied skills to their work to support and challenge school leaders. They have been uncompromising in their determination to recruit a skilled headteacher to continue to improve the good quality of education in the school. They use a variety of means to inform and confirm their views. This includes information from school leaders, reports and reviews from the local authority school improvement adviser, national data information, and visits to school to check on leaders' work. Governors agree that improving the assessment systems and subsequent information about pupils' progress will support them further in checking that every child is making the best gains possible in their learning.

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

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- plans to implement a more refined assessment system are actioned, giving leaders and staff a more accurate view of the progress pupils of all abilities are making, across the year, and from their starting points
- they use the refined assessment systems to accurately identify where individual pupils need further support or challenge in their learning, and check on the impact of support that is put in place as a result
- the new middle leaders for English and mathematics are given clear direction in their roles, so that they can successfully support staff in improving outcomes for all pupils
- standards in writing are improved, particularly for lower and higher ability pupils, with close attention to supporting pupils in building their skills through a task, so that they can successfully apply these skills to longer pieces of writing
- work to improve pupils' skills in mathematics continues, with particular attention to pupils' rapid recall of facts and the development of their reasoning skills.

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

Yours sincerely

Kate Rowley  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During this one-day inspection, we spent time together in classrooms and looking at the quality of pupils' work. Along with the assistant headteacher, we discussed leaders' evaluations of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. We looked at the success of the actions that previous leaders have taken, and the actions you and your team have taken this term. I held discussions with three members of your governing body and had a separate meeting with the local authority school improvement adviser. I met with new leaders for English and early years, as well as the new lead teacher for mathematics, who is based at Warthill CE Primary School. I spoke to pupils about their learning and looked through their work with them. I listened to pupils read. I spoke to parents before school started and took into account the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. The responses from staff and pupils to the Ofsted questionnaires were also considered. I reviewed a number of school documents, including the written evaluation of the school's work, documents relating to checks on the quality of teaching and learning, school assessment information, a range of policies, and safeguarding information.