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Mrs Lisa Gilchrist
Higham-on-the-Hill Church of England Primary School
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Dear Mrs Gilchrist

Short inspection of Higham-on-the-Hill Church of England 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 predecessor school was judged to be good in March 2013. The school joined the Diocese of Leicester Academies Trust in October 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Under your clear leadership, you and the other staff have established a positive, caring school ethos and culture. Pupils thrive, both in their academic and personal development. You are ambitious for the school. You work closely with the governing body and the trust to bring about continuing improvement.

Pupils enjoy learning and make good progress. The very large majority of parents are supportive of the school. Relationships between staff and pupils are very positive. Pupils are proud of their school. They show respect and consideration for each other and their teachers. Pupils are reflective, confident and responsible. Pupils told me how older pupils support younger pupils, whether in the classroom or on the playground. Behaviour is good and pupils conduct themselves very well throughout the school day. Teachers are skilled and enthusiastic. They create an ethos that encourages pupils to enjoy their work, and be successful in their learning. Pupils apply themselves well to all that is asked of them. A pupil in key stage 2 told me how, if they find something tricky, they would, 'try, try again'.

You are implementing a range of initiatives to improve standards across the curriculum. The quality of pupils' handwriting and content of their writing have both improved, for example. Pupils write at length and in a range of subjects. You are developing approaches to the teaching of mathematics that promote pupils' deeper

understanding. You and the other staff have developed the use of outdoor learning opportunities. These have brought added dynamism to teaching and learning in all classes. Pupils in key stage 2 spoke enthusiastically about how they had enjoyed chalking obtuse and acute angles on the playground as part of a mathematics lesson. Teachers generally match work well to the needs of pupils. They ask questions to check pupils' understanding or develop their thinking. Teachers sometimes do not deal with pupils' errors to secure their understanding fully.

The overall picture of attainment at the end of the last academic year was strong. Pupils' current work shows that they are making good progress across a range of subjects. Governors regularly visit the school. They have a good understanding of the school's strengths and the aspects that it can improve further. With the support of the trust, you and the governing body have accurately identified priorities for improvement. Your plans include targets to improve the attainment and progress of pupils in English and mathematics. This includes for specific groups of pupils, such as boys, girls, disadvantaged pupils and the most able. You are working with the trust to refine the school's systems to check how much progress pupils make throughout the school year. Leaders' focus on pupils' progress, however, is not as sharp as it could be.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Records are detailed and of high quality. Staff receive relevant and up-to-date training. Governors are aware of the governing body's responsibilities and regularly visit the school to check safeguarding arrangements.

You and the other staff take pride in knowing each pupil well. This ensures that you take prompt action should the need arise. Pupils are very confident that their teachers would respond quickly to any concerns they might have. They said that they feel safe and that bullying is very rare. The very large majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, or who spoke with me, said that the school keeps children safe. During the inspection, pupils were wearing odd socks as part of the school's work to raise awareness of anti-bullying messages. A very small minority of parents who responded to Parent View did not feel that the school dealt effectively with bullying. The inspection found no evidence that this was the case.

Inspection findings

- At the end of the last academic year, standards were above the national averages for reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stages 1 and 2. Pupils' progress in writing by the end of key stage 2 was well above the national average. Progress in reading and writing was broadly average. The proportions of children achieving a good level of development in early years were close to the national average. The proportion of pupils achieving the required standard in the phonics screening check in Year 1 was in line with the national average.

- Teachers are enthusiastic and have good subject knowledge. They use this well to plan lessons that meet the needs of the pupils. Teaching assistants are well deployed to support pupils' progress. Pupils' current work shows that the large majority of pupils of all abilities are making good progress.
- Pupils complete work to a good standard of writing in a range of genres and different subjects. Pupils make good progress in developing their handwriting. They write sentences of increasing complexity as they learn. Teachers sometimes do not insist that pupils present their work well. Their expectations of the accuracy of pupils' spelling, grammar and punctuation are not consistently high.
- The proportion of girls in the school is higher than that of boys, compared with primary schools nationally. There is some variation in rates of progress in different year groups but, overall, there are no significant differences in the progress of boys and girls in reading, writing and mathematics, or in other subjects.
- Pupils make good progress in mathematics. Teachers use visual imagery and apparatus well to support pupils' learning. Calculation is a strength. Teachers set challenging work for pupils of all abilities. They do not, however, provide frequent enough opportunities for pupils to practise and show their problem-solving and reasoning skills. This applies particularly to the most able pupils.
- Overall attendance at the end of 2017 was lower than in 2016, but was still above the national average. A small number of extended absences had a significant impact on figures. Leaders use the pupil premium funding effectively to improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils is now closer to the national average. Leaders are working hard to emphasise to parents the importance of attendance. They are working particularly with the families of pupils with high absence.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they focus more sharply on checking and setting targets for the progress of different groups of pupils, particularly the most able
- all teachers teach the skills and understanding that pupils need in mathematics to develop and demonstrate their reasoning skills and become effective problem solvers.

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

Yours sincerely

John Lawson
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and shared my four key lines of enquiry. I also met with members of the local governing body and the chief executive officer of the Diocese of Leicester Academies Trust. I met parents at the start of the school day and a group of pupils from Year 6. I considered the 24 responses from Parent View, Ofsted's online survey. There were no responses to the pupil and staff questionnaires. We visited all classes in the school together, spending a short time in each, and we looked at a sample of pupils' work. I viewed a range of documents, including the school's evaluation of its own performance, plans for further development, and information about how the pupil premium is spent and about attendance. I considered a number of policy documents, including those relating to safeguarding.