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Mr Simon Philby
Headteacher
Cockernhoe Endowed CofE Primary School
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Dear Mr Philby

Short inspection of Cockernhoe Endowed CofE Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 22 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 July 2013.

This school continues to be good.

You and your leadership team, supported by improved governance, have quickly and successfully restored the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection.

On your arrival in April 2015, you judged that the quality of education was too low and needed improving. You considered that, in particular, teaching, learning and assessment were not of the standard you expected and pupils were not making sufficient progress. With the support of the local authority, you clearly laid out what needed to improve and quickly began work to bring about the necessary changes. You implemented a rigorous monitoring programme to review the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and put in place a package of support and training for teachers. Consequently, teaching, learning and assessment have improved. Teachers now plan learning for pupils which is interesting, promotes their thinking and enables them to make good, and at times better, progress.

You have successfully improved the areas identified for development at the time of the previous inspection. Through precise monitoring of pupils' progress, you and your leadership team have greater impact on guiding teachers to improve teaching, use assessment effectively and accelerate pupils' learning. You also place high importance on identifying training opportunities for staff which link directly to improving their performance.

You have also improved the learning environment and the school is a bright and welcoming place. Displays showcase pupils' learning and the wide range of experiences that enhance pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. Pupils were observed entering school, happy and content, ready to start their school day. They told me they 'love coming to school and enjoy learning'.

Pupils know and understand the school's values system well. Pupils talked enthusiastically about the value of the month and how they learn about its meaning through assemblies and personal, social and health education lessons. Older pupils demonstrate a deep understanding of these values. For example, explaining respect as 'treating others how you wish to be treated yourself' and stating, 'You don't have to agree with someone to respect them.' They could also recall previous months' values. For example, they articulated freedom as 'being able to do whatever you want but being trusted to do the right thing'. The vast majority of parents agree that their children are happy and safe, describing how you have 'created a warm, close-knit community'.

Children get off to a good start in the early years. You, and your team, have worked effectively with the local authority's early years adviser to extend the opportunities for children to develop emerging reading, writing and mathematics skills. The early years learning areas are well organised with a range of activities that enable children to quickly acquire the skills they need to reach a good level of development. Consequently, they are well prepared as they enter Year 1. The proportion of children achieving a good level of development remains above the national average. This good foundation is successfully built on across key stage 1. Under the leadership of your effective English and mathematics leaders, standards in key stage 1 are consistently high.

Pupils have benefited from a newly resourced library that is well stocked with books that capture pupils' imagination. Your approach has had an impressive impact. Pupils talk about their love of reading. They read widely and often. Your externally verified progress data show that pupils' progress accelerated through Years 5 and 6, considerably counteracting the slower progress they had made throughout lower key stage 2. Overall attainment in reading has improved from the previous academic year.

Pupils made good and sometimes accelerated progress in writing and mathematics through Years 5 and 6. Work in pupils' books demonstrates that this was consistent for current year groups across the school. However, pupils were not able to progress quickly enough to diminish the difference between them and their peers nationally. In 2017, while attainment at key stage 2 was broadly in line with national averages, pupils' progress in writing and mathematics was some way below the national averages. You acknowledge that there are still some gaps in the knowledge of the current Year 6 cohort and that precise interventions are needed to address these quickly.

Prior to inspection, I reviewed the school's website and found that some aspects were not compliant with what schools are required to publish online. You addressed

most of the outstanding areas before I left the school site. However, the school's accessibility plan must be added to make the website fully compliant.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders, including governors, ensure that the school meets its statutory requirement to keep pupils safe. You have all the relevant documentation in place. The single central record is well kept, as are the child protection files. Staff are well trained, vigilant and confident in your, and the deputy senior leader's, work to safeguard children. Staff clearly feel secure to raise issues, and all agree that their concerns are taken seriously and dealt with effectively and quickly.

Governors understand their role in ensuring that pupils are safe and governors are appropriately trained in matters such as safer recruitment and the government's 'Prevent' duty to combat radicalisation. Collectively, you create a culture of safeguarding where pupils' welfare and personal development are at the centre of all you do.

Pupils told me they are safe. They know what to do if they are worried or upset and can explain how to keep themselves safe. They learn about how to stay safe online and why it is important to tell an adult if they come across anything that makes them uncomfortable on the internet. Pupils also described opportunities to learn about wider safety issues such as road safety.

While the overwhelming majority of parents are positive about the school, a very small number commented that bullying may not be dealt with consistently well. During the inspection, I discussed bullying with you and a range of pupils. Pupils have the self-confidence that being safe at school brings. They are clear that bullying rarely happens and if it did then adults would deal with it well and quickly. Your own pupil survey responses support my findings. Your records show that incidents, including bullying, are well documented and addressed promptly.

Inspection findings

- My first key line of enquiry was to look at how effectively leaders, including governors, are increasing the standards of education across the school. This was because in 2017 pupils' progress was below the national average and there have been changes to both the leadership team and the governing body.
- Leaders have faced many challenges in improving the school and have shown tenacity and courage in overcoming them. Supported well by the governing body, leaders have been determined and successful in their efforts to raise the standard of teaching, learning and assessment. You have rightly challenged underperformance. Consequently, staff form a strong performing team that is consistently focused on increasing the rate of pupils' progress and improving the standards of education at the school.
- Governors acknowledge that they were not suitably diligent in ensuring the impact of actions carried out by senior leaders, in the past. This is no longer the case. Governors know and understand the strengths and weaknesses of the

school. They ensure that they check the information leaders provide through a range of appropriate activities. Over the previous two years, governors have undertaken appropriate training so that they are suitably skilled to hold you to account and ask challenging questions about the quality of education.

- At the time of the previous inspection, teaching was not of a consistently high standard. In 2017, key stage 2 pupils did not make the progress they were capable of. Therefore, my second key line of enquiry focused on how leaders ensure that teaching, learning and assessment at key stage 2 are at least good. You manage teachers' performance well. You have put in place a systematic and suitably rigorous approach to monitoring teaching, learning and assessment. This includes working closely with the local authority and other primary schools in the surrounding area to validate the judgements made. Leaders take account of a range of evidence to reach their judgements and set precise targets for teachers, assisting them in improving their performance.
- There are regular pupils' progress meetings in which each pupil's achievement is explored. School leaders and external experts check that teachers' assessments are accurate. As a result, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good and pupils are making consistently good, and sometimes better, progress.
- Staff access high-quality training which is well matched to their development needs. For example, the whole-school training to promote and teach reading has resulted in significant improvements across the school.
- Leaders have remodelled the learning environment. They have also improved the quality of teaching resources, which teachers use effectively to aid pupils' understanding, learning and progress.
- My final key line of enquiry was to look at how effectively teachers use assessment information to match work to pupils' abilities. This was because in the previous inspection it had been identified that teachers did not consistently make the best use of information on pupils' progress, and work was not always matched to pupils' ability.
- Evidence in pupils' books show that pupils have made sustained good, and at times accelerated, progress since the current leadership team's arrival at the school. Teachers typically match work well to pupils' needs and adults respond quickly to rectifying pupils' misconceptions. Teaching assistants are used effectively to close the gaps in pupils' knowledge. For example, as a result of timely and skilful intervention, a pupil learned how to orientate and correctly use the pound sign only hours after their morning work had identified that they had struggled with this concept. Leaders have identified that they need to monitor interventions precisely to ensure that all pupils are receiving the right support in a timely manner.
- You know that the achievement of the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, remains a priority for the school. While the progress the most able make is improving, you recognise that their rate of progress could be better. In many cases, all pupils, including the most able, are making significantly better progress than previously. This is because you and most of your teachers set high expectations, regularly and precisely monitor pupils' progress, and

quickly take action when pupils are falling behind. In the best examples, teachers make the most of learning time and pupils quickly acquire new skills and move onto more challenging concepts. However, not all teachers do this equally well. Some teachers are not yet skilled enough at moving pupils' learning forward when it needs to. This slows the pace of learning for the most able.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- teachers consistently move learning on at a pace so that work more closely matches pupils' needs, in particular for those pupils who are the most able
- through appropriate review and amendment of interventions, accelerated progress for pupils in key stage 2 is maintained and the gaps in pupils' knowledge are eliminated
- the school's website is compliant with regard to what schools should publish online.

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

Yours sincerely

Kerry Grubb-Moore
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I spoke with you, your two senior teachers and the subject leaders. We reviewed an extensive range of pupils' work focusing on English and mathematics. I also met with a group of pupils from Years 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 to discuss their thoughts about school.

Together, we visited the early years, key stage 1 and lower key stage classes, including the activity morning attended by parents and the Nursery and Reception children. Separately, I also visited the upper key stage 2 class. Your mathematics and English leaders looked at pupils' work with me and I spoke to a large number of pupils while we were in lessons. I observed pupils' conduct around school.

I held meetings with members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority. I also reviewed a range of school documentation including governors' minutes, your school development plan and the school's self-evaluation document, safeguarding and recruitment records, child protection files, behaviour

and safeguarding policies, the school's website and information relating to pupils' progress. I also reviewed Parent View responses from 27 parents, as well as 10 staff responses. There were no pupil responses to review.