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Mr Ian Kearns  
Interim headteacher  
St Edmundsbury Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School  
Grove Road  
Bury St Edmunds  
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Dear Mr Kearns

### **Short inspection of St Edmundsbury Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 30 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 March 2013.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. During this time, there have been several staff and governor changes. The school has also grown to include Year 5 and Year 6 pupils.

Since taking up the post of interim headteacher for the autumn term 2017, you have focused resolutely on the pupils in your care. Despite your short time at the school, you are uncompromising in your desire for the school to continually improve. With the support of the very effective deputy headteacher, you have created a positive learning culture through your intent to share responsibilities, increase accountability and give staff ownership of systems and routines. As a result, staff morale is high and together you take collective responsibility for pupils' outcomes. You are working closely with the substantive headteacher, who will join the school in January 2018. Important decisions are made jointly and information is regularly shared to ensure the continuation of the school's good provision.

You have made sure that pupils' basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics develop swiftly. Pupils are polite, confident and very cheerful. They feel well looked after in an environment that you have made inclusive and welcoming. Their behaviour and attitudes to learning are good.

Parents are supportive of the school and value the work of leaders and teachers. They said that staff are 'friendly and approachable'. Parents believe that their

children are 'well looked after by teachers and staff who genuinely care for the children as individuals'. Parents also commented that they like 'the ethos of happiness and well-being' in the school, in addition to the focus on academic achievements.

You, your leadership team and governors are keenly aware of the school's strengths and the areas which need further development. You have clear plans to ensure that the school continues to improve. The local authority has been a valuable source of support in evaluating the school's work and developing the role of governors. Leaders appreciate the local authority's involvement in providing support for vulnerable pupils, and organising opportunities for staff to visit other schools to see best practice. This support has helped you and governors to move forward improvement rapidly. Governors are highly committed to their work and passionate about the school, and they know the school well. They understand their roles in holding the leadership team firmly to account to ensure that the school continues to deliver high-quality education to its pupils.

Governors and leaders have taken effective action to address the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. At that time, inspectors reported the need to increase the contribution of middle leaders to school improvement. Your middle leaders are confident and knowledgeable. They spoke enthusiastically about the range of activities they carry out as part of their responsibilities. This includes checking on the planning, teaching and standards of pupils' work in the teams they lead. Importantly, middle leaders feel that they have a say in what happens, are listened to, and are trusted and valued as colleagues. They also demonstrated where their work is making a positive difference to teaching and learning.

You and governors recognise that there are still areas to develop to move the school forward. For example, you have correctly identified that the school's assessment system needs developing further to enable teachers to monitor the progress of pupils more closely, so that they achieve as well as they can from their different starting points.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders and governors work together effectively to ensure that all policies and practices are fit for purpose and adhere to a culture of safety. Rigorous checks are carried out on all adults who work or volunteer in the school. Staff are well trained and diligent in their duties around keeping children safe. Leaders and governors work effectively with the local authority to meet the needs of vulnerable pupils.

Leaders promote good attendance, using positive praise and reinforcement effectively. Staff carefully track the reasons for absence and work closely with parents to manage situations that affect attendance. As a result, leaders are increasingly successful in preventing persistent absence, including that of disadvantaged pupils, through engagement with parents and by encouraging pupils to come to school every day and on time.

Pupils said that they feel happy, safe and settled in school. Additionally, pupils told me that they know how to keep safe, especially when using the internet. Pupils also said that there is no bullying, and that they can talk to any adult in the school about any worries they may have. Pupils behave well in lessons, around the school and at breaktimes. This is due to the positive relationships they have with staff and the high standards of behaviour that all staff consistently expect of them.

## **Inspection findings**

- I identified specific lines of enquiry to check that the school remains good. We agreed these at the beginning of the inspection. One of the lines of enquiry I explored was the quality of teaching and learning in key stage 2. This was because the school did not admit Year 5 and Year 6 pupils at the time of the previous inspection and there is limited published assessment information on the achievement of these pupils.
- Staff in key stage 2, including those who have recently joined the school, have received appropriate training and support from experienced colleagues to ensure that they have a good understanding of the curriculum and what to expect of pupils in this key stage. In both your single-age and mixed-age classes, teachers plan work that is suited well to pupils' different ages, needs and abilities.
- Pupils' work in books and the school's current assessment information confirm that pupils are making strong progress across all subjects this year. You are currently improving the school's chosen assessment system in order that teachers track more closely what pupils know and can do.
- Another area that I looked at was how leaders are ensuring that pupils achieve well in mathematics across the school. Published assessment information in 2017 shows that pupils in key stages 1 and 2 did not achieve as well in mathematics as they did in reading and writing.
- Your mathematics leader, although new to the role, is confident and passionate about the teaching and learning in this subject. She has already led the teaching team in training to make sure that high-quality mathematics lessons are taught consistently throughout the school. I observed the effective teaching of core mathematical skills, along with regular opportunities for pupils to think deeply and solve problems using their mathematics knowledge in a range of different contexts.
- You and your leaders, in line with the school's marking and feedback policy, ensure that pupils are given the opportunity to reflect on teachers' comments and to identify what they need to do to make better progress. This enables pupils to be clear about how to achieve further success. Pupils told me that they appreciate the guidance they receive which 'challenges us to think hard' and 'helps you to know what to do next'.
- As a result of these focused actions, work in pupils' books, displays around the school and the school's current assessment information demonstrate that pupils are now making better progress in mathematics throughout the school.
- My final line of enquiry considered whether the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is being spent effectively and whether this group of pupils

make good progress across a wide range of subjects. The reason for looking at this area was that the results in the published assessment information in 2017 were varied and in key stage 2 disadvantaged pupils achieved less well than other pupils nationally.

- Leaders and governors ensure that pupil premium funding is used effectively to support disadvantaged pupils. Any barriers to learning are swiftly identified for those disadvantaged pupils who are underachieving, including those who also have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Appropriate interventions and support are effectively put in place to address their learning and well-being needs. The disadvantaged pupils I spoke to during the inspection were confident, happy and fully engaged in their lessons.
- Work in pupils' books shows clear progress and the additional support that has been devised for disadvantaged pupils is having a positive impact. The school's current assessment information demonstrates that disadvantaged pupils are making good progress across the school.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the school's assessment system is developed further to enable teachers to closely follow pupils' progress accurately so that any underachievement is quickly addressed to secure the best possible outcomes for all pupils.

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

Yours sincerely

Fiona Webb  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

- Meetings were held with you, your deputy headteacher, phase leaders and subject leaders. I also met with governors, including the chair of governors, and the local authority standards and excellence officer.
- We discussed the key lines of enquiry for this inspection, the school's internal evaluation of its performance, plans for future improvement and information about current pupils' progress and attainment.
- I gathered a range of evidence to evaluate the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. This included joint observations of teaching and learning in classes with you and your deputy headteacher.

- We looked at a sample of pupils' current work across all subjects and across a wide range of abilities.
- I spoke informally to a number of pupils in classrooms about their learning, and met more formally with a group of pupils to talk about their school experience.
- Policies and procedures for the safeguarding of pupils were examined, including mandatory checks made during the recruitment of new staff and case studies about referrals made to external agencies. A discussion was held with your deputy headteacher, as the school's designated safeguarding lead.
- The views of 42 parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, were taken into account, as well as the 40 responses parents made using the free-text service. I also considered the school's own recent parent survey.
- I looked at the 22 responses to Ofsted's online staff survey and the eight responses to Ofsted's online pupil survey.