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Mrs Elaine Burdiss  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Burdiss

### **Short inspection of Elmsett Church of England VC Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 5 December 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 2014.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in this very small school since the previous inspection. You lead the school with commitment and determination to provide the best possible experiences for pupils. This is a school which adheres strongly to its Christian ethos, ensuring that staff, pupils and families are well supported and treated with kindness and respect. Staff and governors share the same high expectation that every pupil can achieve well. Staff and pupils feel pleased and proud to be part of the school community.

Parents I spoke to informally at the start of the day were unanimous in their praise for the school. Typical comments included, 'There is a real family feel to the school' and 'Every teacher knows every child's name and all the staff are so approachable.' These views were endorsed by most of the parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and by the majority of parents who texted their perceptions of the school.

Pupils behave extremely well in lessons and around school, showing respect and courtesy to each other as well as to staff and visitors. They are interested in their learning and try hard to present their work carefully and meet teachers' expectations. The systems you have put in place to improve outcomes in reading and mathematics are having a positive impact. You have ensured that subject leaders are more influential now, and play a stronger role in monitoring progress and training staff. This has improved leadership across the curriculum.

Music and French are clear strengths of the school. French is extremely well taught by a specialist learning support assistant. Pupils learn to converse confidently, using a wide range of phrases and developing good French accents. The weekly ukulele lessons enable all the pupils in key stage 2 to experience high-quality music provision. Outcomes are high because the tutor's strong subject knowledge is communicated in a lively and engaging manner. Pupils are able to play a variety of cords on their ukuleles; they are developing a strong music vocabulary and thoroughly enjoy their lessons.

Working closely with governors, you have implemented a clear plan for continuing to improve the school, which you review regularly. Priorities are identified through accurate evaluation. Governors play an important role because they offer a good level of challenge to leaders. Governors ensure that information about standards and progress is carefully analysed, and their subsequent decisions are based on clear evidence about priorities. Governors visit the school regularly, and this means that they have a secure understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose, and records of staff suitability to work with children are detailed and of good quality. You and the governing body ensure that staff are kept up to date with safeguarding legislation. Staff know their duties and understand their role in keeping pupils safe at school. Adults who work in the school are well equipped to identify when pupils may be at risk of harm. While there are only a very small number of child protection cases, staff are clear about how to make a referral if they have any concerns. The school's designated safeguarding leaders remain watchful, aware from their own training that vigilance is a key component in every safeguarding system.

The pupils I spoke to informally around the school and those who responded formally to Ofsted's pupil survey told me that they feel safe and happy at school. They consider bullying and bad behaviour to be rare events and they are confident that any member of staff, not just their teachers, will listen to them if they have concerns. Posters which pupils have designed, and which are displayed around the school, remind everyone how to stay safe when using the internet.

Parents' views are also positive. The vast majority agreed that pupils are safe and well cared for at school, with many choosing to express how happy and settled their children are.

### **Inspection findings**

- To ascertain that the school remained good, one of my key lines of enquiry was about the steps leaders and managers have taken to improve the level of challenge for pupils. This was an area identified during the previous inspection and, since then, you have given a high priority to this work. You have ensured

that training for staff has involved raising expectations so that learning can progress faster, in line with the demands of the revised national curriculum.

- Despite the very small numbers of pupils in each cohort, which have the potential to produce variable figures, the percentage of pupils achieving at the highest standard has often been above the national average.
- When we visited classrooms, we observed lessons where pupils were learning effectively because work was well planned and challenged them to think hard. There was further evidence of this good level of challenge in pupils' books. We saw how teachers made their expectations clear and, as a result, pupils' progress and outcomes were almost always in line with, and often above, those seen nationally.
- You have improved approaches to the assessment of reading, by creating individual, target folders to help teachers track the progress of each child. You have also invested wisely in lots of new books which pupils enjoy, and which encourage them to read more frequently and across a wider range of genres. You have also introduced new systems in lessons so that pupils are expected to spend more time editing and improving their written work.
- Your work to improve subject leadership has also had a demonstrable impact on improving outcomes for pupils. The subject leaders I spoke to, responsible for English and mathematics, are actively engaged in work which is driving standards higher. Subject leaders have a good understanding of the quality of teaching and learning in their subjects across the school. They are actively engaged in monitoring, developing teachers' skills and planning improvements. They are acutely aware of the need to ensure that lessons continue to challenge pupils' thinking, and they are able to identify the positive impact their leadership has already had.
- You have identified that not enough pupils are applying their spelling knowledge routinely in their writing and in formal tests and assessments. You are working as part of a small schools' locality group to share ideas, and organise opportunities for staff from local schools to train together. This provides a useful forum to focus on your current, shared priorities, including improving approaches to the teaching of spelling.
- My second line of enquiry was about the quality of teaching and learning across the school. We visited every classroom, spoke to pupils about their work and looked at the work in pupils' books. Work is well matched to pupils' needs, teachers have good subject knowledge, relationships are very strong and pupils clearly enjoy their work and are making good progress.
- In the Reception class, children responded well to challenging work about three-dimensional shapes. They were able to explain how to tell the difference between a cuboid and a triangular prism, for example, by looking closely at the number and shape of the faces. The teacher's insistence on children using precise, mathematical language was an important factor in the good level of understanding they were developing.
- In mathematics, work in pupils' books across key stages 1 and 2 is well presented, evidencing the good progress pupils make from their different starting

points. Work is appropriately pitched and, together with the new system of 'chilli challenges', introduced to provide pupils with work which encourages them to think hard, outcomes in mathematics are often well above the national average. Nevertheless, leaders remain ambitious to ensure that all pupils make as much progress as possible. Senior leaders have identified opportunities for more mathematical reasoning and problem-solving work to be taught to pupils of all abilities. This will equip pupils more fully for the demands of the national tests at the end of each key stage. Consequently, I am asking you to continue your work developing this aspect of the mathematics curriculum.

- Teachers have recently begun to teach whole-class, guided-reading lessons, in order to improve pupils' comprehension skills. This is a recent innovation and, consequently, teachers are still working hard to ensure that these lessons meet the needs of all pupils. More time is needed for teachers to share their experiences of these lessons and to continue to receive training and feedback from senior leaders before a positive impact can be seen.
- My next line of enquiry was about the support you offer to disadvantaged pupils and the impact this has on their progress and attendance. There are very few pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium, but the support for them is carefully planned and meets their needs well. There are opportunities for pupils to participate in activities which develop their social and emotional skills, where these are identified as barriers to their learning. Their attendance is monitored regularly and is in line with national expectations. All eligible pupils are offered financial support to promote their inclusion on school trips and residential visits. They are making good progress in their learning and a high percentage are achieving above national expectations.
- My final line of enquiry was about the quality of the curriculum. While music and French are clear strengths in the provision you offer to pupils, the curriculum as a whole is broad and balanced, interesting and engaging. Pupils experience cookery frequently. For example, pupils in Years 5 and 6 made Christmas cakes recently, and children in the Reception class made gingerbread men as part of their topic on fairy tales. Physical education (PE) teaching is another strength because leaders use national funding well to employ a specialist sports coach who teaches to a high quality. This ensures all pupils make good progress in PE and have the chance to try other sports, such as table tennis. The school's use of local woodland for environmental work and its use of an allotment add an extra dimension to local studies in geography in particular.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- there are more frequent opportunities for all pupils to undertake problem-solving and reasoning work in mathematics
- recent innovations in the teaching of reading as whole-class activities are refined in order to bring about the best progress and outcomes

- more pupils consistently apply their spelling knowledge in their writing across the curriculum and achieve stronger outcomes in formal assessments.

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

Nicholas Rudman  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

I met with you to discuss the school's priorities for development and the impact of actions taken. I also met the leaders who have responsibility for English and mathematics and with the special educational needs coordinator, who also manages provision for disadvantaged pupils. I met with the chair and the vice chair of the governing body. I met with the standards and excellence officer from the local authority. I scrutinised a variety of sources of information including your records of monitoring and evaluation, governing body minutes of meetings, plans and records for the use of additional funding, and the school's assessment information for all year groups. I checked the school's safeguarding and child protection procedures, the records of checks leaders make on the suitability of staff to work with children, and information relating to attendance. We undertook joint observations of learning across the school, looked at work in pupils' books and spoke with pupils about their learning during lessons. I analysed information from Parent View, Ofsted's online system for collecting the views of parents, including responses received by free-text. I also analysed responses from staff and pupils giving their views of the school.