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Mrs Maxine McGarr
Executive Headteacher
Hapton Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School
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Dear Mrs McGarr

Short inspection of Hapton Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 12 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 May 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection.

Since then, this very small school of 35 pupils has federated with two other local primary schools to form the All Saints Federation. You are the executive headteacher of the federation. You have been successful in forging the three schools into a strong unit and you are supported very well by the recently appointed federation deputy headteacher, who works closely with you in setting expectations and driving improvement. The federation's governing body also supports and challenges you effectively, and takes its responsibilities very seriously.

Hapton has benefited considerably from these arrangements, because the two class teachers belong to a much larger group of teaching staff and are able to share good practice and take on new ideas from across the federation and beyond, particularly within the Diss cluster of 11 primary schools. Teaching is consistently strong in both classes and pupils make good progress, whatever their starting points or circumstances.

Hapton is a friendly, happy school, where pupils have the freedom to blossom in a nurturing yet academically rigorous environment. One parent, speaking for many, said, 'It is only a small school, but it plays a big part in our children's lives.'

The school retains its place at the heart of a thriving community. Some of the children are the fifth generation of families to attend.

In the two classrooms, learning is purposeful and teachers manage with considerable skill the wide range of ages and abilities of the pupils. The Reception children gain from sharing their learning with pupils in key stage 1, because this gives them something to aim for and means that the most able children can work alongside their older classmates on work that is suitably challenging. The older pupils enjoy looking after the younger children. Relationships are excellent among pupils and with adults. For example, during the inspection, the whole school came together to make jam tarts, with pupils working in mixed-age groups and thoroughly enjoying measuring out the ingredients, rolling the pastry and adding the jam. The school was a flurry of activity and joyful collaboration. As one pupil commented, 'Everybody's friendly and kind.'

You make sure that even though they live in a fairly isolated rural location, pupils have a good understanding of life in modern Britain. They take full advantage of the history and diversity available in Norwich, and visit different places of worship in Ipswich, including a mosque and a gurdwara. Pupils know about fundamental British values, such as democracy and tolerance. The school council was elected by secret ballot. Pupils read books from the school library that reflect the different cultures, and the life choices that people make, in today's society.

The curriculum is well designed and caters for pupils' needs and aspirations. It is enriched by numerous trips and interesting visitors. For example, the older pupils visited the Sutton Hoo burial as part of their studies into the Anglo-Saxons. There is also room for spontaneity: younger pupils responded to that day's snow by writing about a wintry scene.

Because year groups are so small (there have only been four pupils in Year 6 in each of the past two years), it is not possible to discuss the performance of individual cohorts because the pupils can be recognised. However, from their different starting points, pupils achieve well and some excel. For example, all pupils reached the expected standard in the phonics screening check last year. Disadvantaged pupils make the same good progress as their classmates.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding at the school. Teaching staff know pupils and their families very well because it is such a small school. They are alert to any changes that may make pupils vulnerable. Leaders ensure that safeguarding procedures are robust and that they keep meticulous records of pupils causing concern. The single central record of all those who work at the school fully meets requirements and is up to date. All staff have had recent training on matters relating to keeping pupils safe, and have signed to confirm that they have read all the relevant documentation and will follow the procedures correctly. You and the federation deputy headteacher, as well as the senior teacher based at Hapton, have

all had training as designated safeguarding leads and are fully conversant with the latest requirements.

Pupils said they feel safe in school, a view that is supported by parents. Pupils look out for one another and are always willing to support anybody who is going through a tough time. As one parent commented, 'Children and staff alike look after each other.' Pupils take a mature approach to 'the ups and downs' of life and the school equips them well to deal with the particular challenges they may be facing.

Inspection findings

- In order to make sure that the school remains good, I identified a number of key lines of enquiry that we agreed at our initial meeting. First of all, we considered what leaders have done to improve writing since the previous inspection, especially across different subjects and genres. This was because writing formed an area for improvement at that time.
- Leaders have revised the curriculum since the previous inspection to ensure that writing is taught across a range of subjects. Writing that pupils completed last year and this term shows that they are producing good-quality work using a wide variety of genres.
- An emphasis on high-quality texts means that pupils are inspired to write with greater sophistication. For example, pupils in the key stage 2 class wrote a persuasive letter to Beowulf as part of their studies on the Anglo-Saxons. They showed me how they had used emotive language, alliteration, exaggeration and rhetorical questions to win over the warrior to their cause.
- Pupils have become better at redrafting and editing their work, and publishing it for different audiences. Their grasp of grammar, spelling and punctuation is good. However, pupils have not done as much extended writing in science as they have in other subjects, especially in key stage 2.
- The second line of enquiry we agreed was how effectively leaders are supporting the relatively large numbers of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities to make good progress from their starting points. This was because these pupils form a significant group within the school.
- Almost four in 10 pupils who attend the school have SEN and/or disabilities. The proportion of pupils who have education, health and care plans is very high. Parents are attracted to send their children to the school because of its excellent reputation for supporting these pupils in a friendly, nurturing way.
- You were the SEN coordinator across the federation and so know the pupils at Hapton very well. One of the teaching staff is now taking on this role. Pupils come with many different needs, but leaders are adept at providing support that is tailored to meet them. This includes interventions in language, reading, writing, mathematics and art therapy.
- You keep careful track of the progress that pupils make and the effectiveness of the support they receive. This is then adjusted in the light of how well pupils achieve. You were able to give me several case studies where pupils had made

rapid progress since joining the school, including a transformation in their attitudes and behaviour. Many of the pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities go on to reach age-related expectations in their attainment because of the good-quality support they receive. Teaching assistants are trained well to help pupils make accelerated progress. Their positive impact was evident when we visited classrooms.

- The final key line of enquiry we agreed related to attendance and persistent absence, especially of disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities. This was because the attendance of these groups fell behind other pupils in the most recently published information, and attendance was an area for improvement at the previous inspection.
- Attendance at Hapton remains a thorny issue, not least because some parents do not give it the same priority as you do. The same federation leaders oversee high attendance at the two partner schools, but at Hapton attendance remains below average. It is fair to say that you are not doing any less at Hapton than you do at the other schools in the federation. It is just that the attendance has not improved so rapidly.
- The figures are made worse by circumstances beyond your control relating to individual families but, even when these factors are taken into account, the attendance of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and those who are disadvantaged is not good enough.
- You recognise that you must renew your efforts to improve attendance for these groups, and have identified new ways that you can raise the profile of attendance for pupils and families – for example, by reviewing the current rewards system for good attendance.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- attendance improves at least to the national average by reinforcing the importance of attending school with pupils and their families, focusing on disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities
- there is more extended writing in science, especially at key stage 2.

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

Yours sincerely

Nick Butt
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, other school leaders, three governors including the chair, administrative staff and pupils. I held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. Several visits were made to both classrooms where books were scrutinised. I examined a range of documents, policies and assessment information. I considered 15 responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 14 free-text messages. I also considered questionnaire responses from 11 members of staff.