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Mr Jonathan Grant
Headteacher
The North Cotes Church of England Primary School
Sea Lane
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Dear Mr Grant

Short inspection of The North Cotes Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 16 January 2018, 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.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

Since the last inspection, there have been changes to the leadership of the school. You are currently the interim headteacher and you appointed a new class teacher in September. Prior to your appointment, you worked with the school to develop whole-school assessment systems and to develop middle leadership skills. This arrangement was swiftly brokered by the local authority. The local authority has also provided support to develop the skills and expertise of the governing body. Funding has also been provided to increase the range of resources in the school to develop the core subjects.

In a short time, you have promptly evaluated the quality of education at the school. You have made accelerating pupils' progress a high priority and put plans in place to improve all aspects of the school's provision through comprehensive action plans. You are providing bespoke support for a newly qualified teacher.

At the time of the last inspection, leaders were asked to ensure that pupils regularly use their mathematical skills in other subjects. You have ensured that pupils use a range of materials to use and apply their mathematical skills. Pupils have opportunities to learn about influential mathematicians from the past in their history lessons. Pupils also enjoy using interesting resources to help them solve problems in challenging ways. You acknowledge that further work is needed to develop pupils' problem-solving and reasoning skills so that a greater proportion achieves the higher standard at the end of key stage 2.

You and your team are developing the planning of mathematics to ensure that it provides appropriate challenge for pupils. You are also using the expertise of the Kyra Teaching School Alliance to develop mathematical teaching.

You and your team are improving the planning of the core subjects to mixed-age classes. You are monitoring this carefully through regular moderation activities in school and with other local schools to check on pupils' progress. You note that this continues to be a key focus for you and your team to ensure that planning meets the specific needs of pupils.

You showed me pupils' books and it was evident that teachers ensure that pupils present their work to a high standard. Pupils take pride in their work. Teachers and teaching assistants provide opportunities in lessons to ask questions to deepen pupils' understanding. For example, during an English lesson, the class teacher supported pupils to think carefully about the setting of a story. Pupils were encouraged to describe the setting using the character's senses. The class teacher asked questions effectively to ensure that pupils used appropriate metaphors and similes in their writing. Pupils successfully shared their ideas with each other and wrote well-structured paragraphs.

You explained how, since the previous inspection, the Reception class outdoor area had been developed. You and the early years leader have provided a range of outdoor equipment to help children develop all areas of their learning. Children particularly enjoy playing in the sand tray with an assortment of containers. The outdoor area is well organised and an interesting place to learn. Learning in the classroom is fun and interesting for the children. For example, the early years leader has created an 'igloo' and linked this to children's understanding of the polar regions. Story books have also been used to show the animals that live in these environments. Children enjoy their learning and make good progress in the early years.

Pupils enjoy coming to school and value the enrichment opportunities on offer, such as the range of sports clubs. Pupils are encouraged to care for each other. They are praised by adults for showing the school's values of kindness, respect and generosity, which are deep-rooted values of the school. One pupil said that 'respect is important to make better friendships'. Pupils are thoughtful and caring individuals.

Parents and carers with whom I spoke were full of praise for the school. They commented that, should they have a concern, staff are available to talk to. Parents feel that their children are happy and safe at the school. This was also echoed by the pupils, who said that, should they have a concern, they know they can speak to an adult. They are confident that adults will sort out any concerns they may have.

Staff feel well supported by the headteacher. The newly qualified teacher values the professional development she receives. Staff have welcomed the support received from teachers in other schools. The headteacher has quickly implemented a range of informal and formal arrangements with other local schools to help further improve the quality of teaching and learning.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You work closely with the school's business manager to ensure that systems in place are thorough and robust. Your records are well maintained and you have a good understanding of individual cases and pupils' needs.

Staff across the school have a good understanding of their role and responsibility in keeping children safe. They are knowledgeable about the signs of abuse and receive regular updates. The governing body regularly monitors the systems in place and understands the importance of safeguarding in the school. The governing body and staff have had relevant safeguarding training and receive regular updates.

Pupils know how to keep safe and receive frequent reminders in assembly about keeping safe online. They told me that bullying is rare and that pupils have full confidence in staff to resolve any concerns they may have.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection, we looked at the effectiveness of safeguarding in the school. We also considered the development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. The areas for improvement from the last inspection were also evaluated. We evaluated how you and your team are ensuring that the higher-attaining pupils make good progress in mathematics. We also evaluated the teaching of reading so that a greater proportion of pupils make good progress.
- The teaching of phonics is consistent in the early years and across key stage 1. Adults use resources well to help pupils learn their letter sounds effectively. During the inspection, I listened to pupils read. They used their phonics skills well to read unfamiliar words. Pupils who read to me said that they enjoyed reading. Pupils in key stage 2 have opportunities to read and respond to high-quality texts to develop their comprehension skills.
- You and your team ensure that the development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is a high priority in the school. On a regular basis during assemblies, pupils' acts of kindness are praised by teachers in the school's Values Book. For example, one child was praised for helping to tidy up after breakfast club. Teachers emphasise the importance of the school's values and how they help pupils to support each other. Regular school attendance is also highly praised. The school's prayer sums up the school's rich ethos that 'so many hearts make a school'. Pupils value diversity and respect each other's differences.
- You and your team are developing assessment systems and using this information to further improve the quality of planning, particularly in mathematics. Pupils use a range of resources to develop their skills and understanding. However, you acknowledge that, in some lessons, teachers do not always give clear explanations or check regularly enough on pupils' understanding throughout the lesson. Some pupils' learning slows in lessons and they do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- You have quickly dealt with developing teachers' planning in mathematics. However, you note that there is further work to be done to ensure that teachers consistently

provide pupils with enough opportunities to use and apply their problem-solving and reasoning skills. Pupils' books show that they do not have enough opportunities to practise their problem-solving and reasoning skills. As a result, too few pupils reach the higher standard in mathematics at the end of key stage 2.

- You recognise that the further development of middle leaders' skills is a key priority. You have already put training in place and work closely with middle leaders to develop their subject knowledge and expertise. You have harnessed the skills of other leaders in local schools to help develop middle leadership skills. Building partnerships with local schools is increasing the confidence of your team and the opportunities to share effective practice.
- The governing body has welcomed the support from a national leader of governance, commissioned by the local authority, to improve governors' understanding of their roles and responsibilities. The governing body recognises the importance of monitoring consistently the work of the school. Governors know that they have to improve this aspect of the school's leadership so that they are in a position to challenge leaders effectively. Not all governors are as knowledgeable as they should be about the work of the school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers give clear explanations and check pupils' understanding regularly in class so that they make rapid progress in mathematics
- teachers consistently provide opportunities for pupils to use and apply their skills in problem-solving and reasoning activities, particularly for the most able
- middle leadership is developed so that these leaders' skills and expertise support the drive for further improvement in their subjects
- the governing body develops its skills and expertise so that governors can challenge leaders more effectively.

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

Yours sincerely

Emma Nuttall
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and two governors, including the chair of the governing body, and with the school improvement adviser. I also met with 10 pupils and listened to several pupils read. You and I observed learning throughout the morning, including in phonics, mathematics and English. We also observed learning in the early years.

I scrutinised a selection of pupils' workbooks. I examined a range of the school's documentation, including the self-evaluation document, its improvement plan and documents relating to safeguarding.

I considered the views of parents with whom I spoke before the start of the school day. There were not enough responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, to be considered. There were no pupils or staff responses for me to consider. There were two responses from parents to Ofsted's free-text service.