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Mrs Judith Bentley  
Headteacher  
Heckington St Andrew's Church of England School  
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Dear Mrs Bentley

### **Short inspection of Heckington St Andrew's Church of England School**

Following my visit to the school on 9 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 November 2012.

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.**

Relationships between pupils and teachers are strong and supportive. Pupils enjoy coming to school. Over the last three years, school leaders and teachers have sought to give pupils a real passion for learning and to enrich their experience of learning, both inside and outside the classroom. The pupils I spoke with told me how interesting they find their lessons and how much they enjoy working with their friends, exploring different topics. During the morning of the inspection, I observed a group of pupils in the hall who were clearly enthralled by the tales and possessions of a school visitor dressed as an Anglo-Saxon. Pupils also told me how much they enjoy taking part in school trips, such as the one to Southwell workhouse. A real strength of the school lies in the large number of pupils who have the opportunity to learn a musical instrument through the 'Colour Strings' initiative and to take part in music-making activities, such as the 'Young Voices' choir and the community orchestra. The school has been designated a silver award music school in recognition of the work it has done in this area. The school's involvement in the outreach programme of a local secondary school has also given more pupils the chance to benefit from a range of sporting activities. The school's strong ties with local churches and their involvement in a range of charity projects contribute strongly to the school's caring ethos.

Following the last inspection, leaders were asked to make sure that the work set is always demanding for all of the pupils, and particularly in mathematics. By the end of key stage 2, the percentage of pupils achieving the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics is typically similar to the national average. At key stage 1, it is above. As you recognise, however, too few pupils achieve the higher standard of work at both key stages in all three subjects. By the end of key stage 2, the progress made by pupils in reading and writing is similar to that made by pupils nationally, but in mathematics it is well below. During the mathematics lesson that you and I observed, there was insufficient consolidation of key mathematical concepts. In addition, the teacher did not stretch the pupils with sufficient opportunities to work at the higher standard. As a result, learning slowed. Work in books shows an increased emphasis in mathematics on the teaching of mastery skills and in strengthening mathematical reasoning. However, some pupils pay insufficient attention to the accuracy of their work. During the review of pupils' work that we undertook in English, we found insufficient evidence of the most able pupils achieving the highest standard. While the content of pupils' work is often good, it is marred by grammatical inaccuracy and poor presentation. We also felt that, although teachers provide feedback about pupils' work, it is not clear that this always produces the desired improvements in their written work.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and the school follows the local authority guidance on safeguarding. School policies are up to date. The single central record is well maintained and shows that the necessary vetting checks take place when new staff come to work at the school. Staff receive regular safeguarding training and updates. The school makes use of organisations such as the NSPCC to give weight to the training that staff receive and to ensure that all aspects of safeguarding remain high on the school agenda. The records that the school keeps are detailed and are safely stored. Pupils say that they feel safe at school and would know who to speak to if they had any concerns.

The school has a positive and friendly atmosphere. While pupils feel that the school deals with incidents of bullying effectively, parents who responded to Parent View expressed more mixed views. School documentation shows that records of bullying and other unacceptable forms of behaviour are recorded, investigated and dealt with. Governors are of the view that although incidents sometimes occur, they are isolated and not part of the wider culture of the school. I agree with this view.

### **Inspection findings**

- Governors are ambitious for the school, are broadening their range of expertise and are now increasingly challenging as well as being supportive. They have a secure understanding of school performance information and of the school's current effectiveness. They are clear about what is going well and also about what needs to be better. Over the last three years, there have been changes in senior leadership and a large turnover in staff, coupled with ineffective communication. This has led to the development of negative perceptions of the

school among a number of parents. Some parents feel that any concerns that they have had have been ignored by school leaders.

- The school's current approach to the monitoring and evaluation of school performance is not sufficiently robust. This is also true of the way in which the school tracks pupils' progress. As the newly appointed headteacher, you are honest and open about what improvements need to be made in order that the faith of all members of the school community in the work of the school can be fully restored. Your vision of how the school can be improved has the full backing of school governors and members of staff.
- Our review of pupils' work showed no marked difference in the progress being made by disadvantaged pupils and their classmates. However, currently the school's rationale in respect of how pupil premium funding might be best spent to overcome pupils' barriers to learning is insufficiently clear. Additionally, governors do not have the necessary information to ascertain the extent to which this funding is having a positive impact on the progress of individual pupils.
- In 2017, there was a decline in the percentage of pupils who achieved the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check. The evidence that you and I gathered from our observation of phonics teaching suggested that the teaching of phonics is effective and that the decline in results in 2017 was due to these pupils' lower starting points. Usually, your pupils do as well as pupils nationally in the Year 1 check.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they improve leadership and management across the school by providing leadership training for both senior and middle leaders, strengthen monitoring and evaluation processes and increase levels of accountability
- governors receive clear information about how pupil premium funding is spent and hold leaders to account for its impact on pupils' outcomes
- they develop strong partnership working with parents, using this to shape and drive improvements at the school
- teaching challenges all pupils, so that by the end of both key stage 1 and key stage 2 the proportion of pupils are achieving the higher standard is at least in line with that seen nationally.

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

Philip Drabble  
**Ofsted Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I held meetings with you and your deputy headteacher and with members of the governing body, including the chair. I had a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority and met with a group of staff. I also met with your subject leader for mathematics. I spoke with a group of pupils and listened to two pupils reading. I spoke with parents as they brought their children to school and had a meeting with one parent who asked to meet me. I also observed three lessons.

I scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school development plan and documents relating to safeguarding. I took account of the responses to Ofsted's online parents' survey, Parent View, and reviewed the results from your own survey of parents' views.