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Sally-Anne Caunter  
Headteacher  
Barkston and Syston CofE Primary School  
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Dear Mrs Caunter

### **Short inspection of Barkston and Syston CofE Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 24 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 February 2014.

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

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

Through your strong and steadfast leadership, you have continued to raise pupils' achievement. You have a well-informed view of how well individual pupils are learning over time. You have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. This is based on a detailed analysis of how well different groups of pupils are doing compared with other pupils nationally.

The school provides a warm, welcoming and caring environment. Pupils' behaviour and conduct are good. For much of the time, pupils' conduct is exemplary. Pupils are courteous and show a great deal of respect towards adults and each other. Pupils told me how much they enjoy their learning. They also told me about the many different extra-curricular activities in which they take part. Pupils hold positions of responsibility and fulfil their duties with passion and determination. The pupils are proud to be a part of their school.

Teaching provides pupils with engaging activities. Teachers use effective questioning to check pupils' understanding and to make them think hard. They conscientiously rectify any misconceptions in pupils' understanding. Teaching assistants are effective in helping pupils understand their learning. Pupils participate with enthusiasm. They work well together when completing the tasks teachers set. They take pride in the way they present their work and are keen to do well.

You make valuable use of assessment information to check on how well pupils are learning. Subject leaders provide you with good support. Staff form a dedicated team that is committed to providing pupils with a high-quality learning experience.

Since the last inspection, the proportion of pupils reaching national standards at the end of the Reception Year, Year 2 and Year 6 has increased. In particular, children in the early years achieve well and pupils' attainment in the phonics screening checks is high. Pupils make good progress during key stage 1 and achieve above the national averages in reading, writing, mathematics and science. By the end of key stage 2, pupils attain above the national average in writing. Until 2017, they also attained above the national averages in reading and mathematics.

The governing body is made up of a committed and experienced group of individuals. You and subject leaders provide the governing body with useful information about the school's effectiveness. Governors confirm this information in different ways during their visits to the school. The information leaders share with the governing body, however, does not routinely provide it with enough detail about pupils' progress. The effectiveness of leaders' actions to raise pupils' achievement is not, therefore, understood well enough by the governing body.

You have taken action to deal with the areas identified for improvement at the last inspection. Teachers now use information about pupils' prior learning to plan work that is better matched to their needs. Some pupils commented on the extra support they receive to help them in their learning. Others told me how challenging their work can be. You have also revised the school's marking and feedback policy, which is consistently followed by staff. Pupils appreciate the time set aside to review and improve their learning.

Most pupils continue to make good progress. Too few, however, make enough progress to reach the higher national standards or to show work of greater depth. You are aware that teachers do not move pupils' learning on fast enough in reading, writing and mathematics, particularly when they find the work straightforward. You also acknowledge that the success criteria in the school's improvement plan are not refined enough to measure the extent of pupils' progress. Furthermore, you understand that the information you share with the governing body about pupils' progress is not as comprehensive as it should be.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You diligently apply procedures to ensure that pupils keep safe in school. Staff are well trained and understand the different policies related to safeguarding. They are confident in what action they would take if they had a concern. The records you maintain are informative and thorough.

Pupils told me that they feel safe in school and their responses to Ofsted's survey of pupils confirmed this view. Pupils explained to me the different ways staff help them

to keep safe and to care for themselves. Most parents and carers who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, agreed that their children are safe and looked after well.

## **Inspection findings**

- In 2017, pupils made slower progress in mathematics by the end of key stage 2 than the national average. This was especially true for girls and for the most able pupils. Leaders' careful analysis of pupils' test papers identified that some pupils had found the problem-solving tasks too difficult. Leaders have modified the mathematics curriculum to include more opportunities for pupils to solve problems. Examples of this were seen during the inspection in both lesson observations and in pupils' workbooks.
- Leaders have provided staff with extra training on developing the skills pupils need to be more successful. Work with partner schools has enabled staff to share the most effective approaches to the teaching of mathematics. Subject leaders are making more thorough checks on what pupils are being taught and on pupils' progress.
- The school's current assessment information indicates that more pupils are once again making good progress in mathematics. More pupils are also achieving a higher standard than pupils did in 2017. This is also the case for girls and for the most able pupils. The increased number of pupils who are making rapid progress, however, is not yet consistent in all year groups.
- Pupils make good progress in reading and writing in key stage 2. In 2017, however, their progress by the end of Year 6 was not as rapid as it had been in previous years. Leaders have taken action to accelerate pupils' progress again in reading and writing. For example, weekly writing activities provide pupils with opportunities to practise specific writing skills. More pupils are now making accelerated progress in writing.
- The pupils who read to me told me they enjoyed reading. Pupils were confident and fluent when reading their chosen books. They use their reading skills well when faced with new or difficult words. Pupils' understanding of what they were reading was strong. Pupils make good progress in reading, but leaders' actions to increase the number of pupils who make more rapid progress have not yet made enough difference in some year groups.
- The numbers of pupils who achieve higher standards in their learning by the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2, are typically high. In 2017, however, the numbers fell. Leaders' actions to increase the number of pupils who reach a greater depth in their learning are effective. The school's current assessment information indicates that more pupils are again achieving a greater depth. This is especially the case for English, grammar, punctuation and spelling. A few pupils, however, in some years, are not yet attaining standards as high as they should.

## **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- improvement plans identify clear, precise and measurable success criteria for pupils' progress
- teachers move pupils on to more challenging work in reading, writing and mathematics more quickly so that they make faster progress and achieve greater depth to their learning
- senior leaders provide governors with detailed and timely information about pupils' progress to measure the effectiveness of leaders' actions.

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

Vondra Mays  
**Ofsted Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I held meetings with you and members of the governing body. You and I made a series of visits to lessons. I met with a group of pupils and spoke informally with other pupils. I listened to pupils in Year 2 and Year 5 read and examined samples of pupils' work.

I also considered a range of documents. These included the school's self-evaluation, the school's improvement plan and records relating to pupils' attainment and progress.

I reviewed the school's website to check that it meets the requirements on the publication of specified information. Safeguarding practices were also reviewed and two complaints, retained for this inspection, were considered.

I considered the views of 46 parents posted on Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and the 26 free-text responses. A telephone call from one parent was also considered. I also took account of the 23 responses from pupils and the six responses from staff to Ofsted's online surveys.