

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mrs Elaine Hughes-Narborough  
Headteacher  
Thornaby-on-Tees Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School  
Baysdale Road  
Thornaby  
Stockton-on-Tees  
TS17 9DB

Dear Mrs Hughes-Narborough

### **Short inspection of Thornaby-on-Tees Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 30 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 October 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.**

The previous inspection's recommendations challenged you to improve teaching and learning in mathematics, specifically in key stage 1. You have done so successfully. Leaders' actions have ensured that the proportion of pupils in key stage 1 reaching the expected standard in mathematics has been sustained in line with national averages over time. Furthermore, in both 2016 and 2017, a higher proportion of key stage 1 pupils reached a greater depth of learning in mathematics than proportions seen nationally.

You were also asked to strengthen links with parents and carers to improve pupils' attendance, and indeed improved attendance is evident. In recent years, pupils' overall attendance has been in line with the national average. The proportion of pupils who are regularly absent from school is lower than the national average.

Since the previous inspection, there has been a great deal of shift and change. You and governors have overseen the completion of several significant building projects to expand the school and improve provision. In addition, a large proportion of teachers and leaders are new or recently appointed. During this period of turbulence, you have maintained a calm, positive and welcoming ethos across the school.

Not all subject leaders, however, have settled into and taken ownership of their new or recently acquired roles. Several have yet to monitor effectively the quality of teaching and learning in their areas of responsibility. As a result, not all leaders understand the specific strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning in their areas of responsibility. This is limiting leaders' effectiveness in securing rapid school improvement across the curriculum, for example in science. You have accurately identified that monitoring procedures need tightening if leaders are to gather accurate and more detailed information about the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. You also understand that leaders need opportunities and support as well as challenge to manage their duties successfully.

You have correctly recognised reading as an area requiring closer scrutiny. You have been disappointed by pupils' outcomes in reading, particularly those of children in the early years and disadvantaged pupils in key stage 2. Rates of progress for current pupils in reading remain variable. Pupils' skills of inference and deduction, in particular, are not consistently well developed. Information that you provided also demonstrated that some pupils in each year group do not read frequently with adults in school.

The local authority has recently supported and challenged you to develop and improve practice in the early years. You agree that there is work to do. Over time, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development by the time they leave the Reception class is lower than the national average. At times, some adults' expectations of what young children can do and achieve are too low. Children do not have sufficient challenge in their learning of the basic skills of reading and writing. Currently, children's work and school information show that rates of progress from starting points are variable in these specific early learning goals.

Pupils have a warm rapport with adults in school. They talk positively about aspects of the curriculum and especially enjoy mathematics. Pupils are also particularly excited and appreciative of the range of after-school clubs that staff provide. These extra-curricular opportunities enrich pupils' daily experiences and broaden their interests effectively. You value these beneficial contributions that the large majority of staff are committed to and make on a voluntary basis.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You and other leaders correctly prioritise the safety and protection of pupils and have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. The designated pastoral leader works tirelessly with families, pupil groups and individuals to meet the needs of any who may be vulnerable. Leaders and staff have forged strong links with external partners and agencies, such as health, police and social workers, to ensure that families' and pupils' needs are identified and met promptly.

This is a friendly school with a distinctively Christian ethos. The positive relationships and mutual respect that exist between adults and pupils are evidence

of your work to ensure that pupils feel cared for and valued. Pupils said that adults would listen if they have worries. They are confident that bullying is not an issue at their school, although you ensure that any concerns are recorded and investigated.

Governors and staff understand their duties regarding the care and protection of children because of regular, good-quality training that you organise. You keep notes of staff attendance at training to ensure that essential safeguarding updates have not been missed by individuals. All staff demonstrate an appropriately vigilant stance, with 'it could happen here' attitudes with regards to protecting pupils from harm. Staff know how to report any concerns that they might have. Checks on the suitability of staff working with pupils are appropriately rigorous.

### **Inspection findings**

- Leaders have drawn on research as well as internal and external expertise to develop their strategies for improving outcomes in mathematics. Staff enthuse and excite pupils successfully, using a range of tactics to develop pupils' fluency in manipulating numbers and to grab their interest. Pupils said that they enjoy learning about mathematics. They work with improved confidence to reason and solve increasingly complex problems across year groups. Pupils' outcomes have improved over time, and current year groups are making similarly strong progress.
- Subject leaders, many of whom are new or recently appointed, bring a wide range of skills and strong personal subject knowledge to their areas of responsibility. They are committed to improving outcomes for pupils in their area of responsibility. Several, however, do not yet monitor teaching and learning effectively or in a consistent and thorough manner, for example, by carrying out regular activities such as observing lessons, talking with pupils, checking work in pupils' books or analysing assessment information across year groups. You agree that, in order to understand precisely where areas of strength and weakness lie across the curriculum, subject leaders need increased opportunities, support and challenge.
- Children are happy and well cared for in the early years. There are wide smiles and a positive vibe across the key stage. Children and adults in both Nursery and Reception classes regularly burst into well-practised song together, which helps children to learn and remember number sequences or new vocabulary in a fun manner. There are frequent bouts of energetic activity, developing fine and gross motors skills effectively. Challenge in terms of reading and writing in areas of provision and during teacher-led tasks, however, is lacking for some pupils. Not all adults have high enough expectations of what young children are capable of doing and achieving. Together with your deputy headteacher and early years leader, you are correctly targeting these issues for improvement appropriately.
- You and other leaders have worked diligently to raise the profile of reading. You recognise that reading remains a priority area for improvement. Several initiatives have begun to spark pupils' interests, and intervention work is supporting some groups that are falling behind their peers. You use books as rewards for good effort and work, and encourage frequent reading at home through a range of

additional incentives. Nonetheless, although pupils' outcomes in key stage 2 improved slightly in 2017 in comparison with the school's 2016 outcomes, disadvantaged pupils' outcomes, in particular, were low compared to the national average. Inspection evidence shows that not all pupils read frequently with adults in school.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- subject leaders, for example in science, monitor their areas of responsibility thoroughly, in order to identify strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning accurately and plan accordingly for improvement
- all pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils and those in the early years, read frequently with adults
- adults working with children in the early years have consistently high expectations of what young children can do and achieve
- sufficient challenge is provided for children in the early years in terms of reading and writing.

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

Yours sincerely

Fiona Manuel

**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During this inspection, I spent time with you and your deputy headteacher. We jointly observed teaching, learning and assessment in the large majority of classes across the school. I scrutinised work in pupils' books, spoke with pupils from each key stage, listened to pupils read and considered the response by one pupil to Ofsted's online questionnaire. I reviewed school documentation and information, including policies, assessment information, monitoring files and your school improvement plans. I met with governors, including the vice-chair of the governing body. I also met with a representative from the local authority. I talked with parents at the school entrance, taking account of the 16 free-text comments and the 32 responses by parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. Staff did not complete Ofsted's online questionnaire; however, I spoke with members of staff during the inspection and considered their views.