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Mrs Lesley Payne  
Headteacher  
Saxlingham Nethergate CofE VC Primary School  
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Dear Mrs Payne

### **Short inspection of Saxlingham Nethergate CofE VC 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 2012.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You, the staff and governors have accurately identified the school's strengths and areas for further development. For example, you have ensured that assessment of pupils' achievement is accurate. You have addressed the issues from the last inspection.

Pupils love coming to school because of the interesting and rich curriculum. When we visited every class, pupils were working hard on the tasks the teachers set for them and there was a real buzz of excitement and enthusiasm for learning. Pupils say the school is very welcoming and friendly. One pupil said, 'It's amazing! It's the best school in the world! Until after Year 6, it's the best school for me!'

Parents and carers are very pleased with the school. All of the 38 parents who responded to Parent View would recommend the school to another parent. Those parents I talked with on the playground spoke very highly of the positive changes you have made to the organisation of the school. One parent said, 'I cannot say enough nice things about this school. We are very happy. There have been changes since the new headteacher took over but they are all for the better. There's lots more extra-curricular activities especially sports and music.' One or two parents raised concerns about the progress their children make. Inspection evidence indicates all pupils make good progress from their various starting points.

Staff are very happy with your leadership of the school. They say how much communication has improved between staff and with parents. There are many opportunities to talk about pupils' learning in staff meetings and to share pupils' learning and progress with parents. For example, in early years, parents are invited to come and watch lessons so they understand how teachers help their children to learn. Staff like your 'hands-on' approach to checking how well pupils are learning. They like the regular drop-ins to lessons and scrutiny of pupils' work. One teacher said, 'The headteacher constantly challenges our thinking about how pupils learn.' Staff say there are good opportunities to improve their practice. They have gained a lot from working with teachers and support staff from the nearby partner school.

Although your self-evaluation is a precise and accurate account of the school, your school improvement plan is not as effective. For example, you identified four areas to improve last year but none of your plans were fully completed. Your most recent plan to improve pupils' spelling has been completed because you were crystal clear about the outcome you expected and set a tight timescale for each activity.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

All safeguarding policies and procedures are fully in place and meet requirements. Staff have regular training and so have a good knowledge and understanding of how to make sure the most vulnerable pupils are safe. Staff are also confident in how to record incidents or accidents and make sure parents are informed.

Record-keeping is detailed and provides a precise account of any concerns raised by pupils, parents or staff. Pupils feel very secure in school. One pupil said, 'When you come to school, you feel safe because you can talk to your teachers and your friends.' All pupils commented on how easy it is to make friends at school. One pupil commented, 'This school is really good. It makes me feel nice. We always make friends and I have lots of friends. If we fall out, we always come together again.'

### **Inspection findings**

- My first line of enquiry was about the accuracy of assessment and effectiveness of provision for pupils you have identified as having special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. We talked through each pupil on your SEN register with the SEN coordinator (SENCo). Both you and the SENCo have a detailed knowledge and understanding of every pupil's special needs. You make sure that pupils who require expert diagnosis and support get access to this as quickly as possible. For example, you have rapidly arranged speech and language therapy for several pupils. You have employed an independent social worker, and her support for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties has been particularly effective. For example, she has ensured that teachers have effective strategies to support pupils' behaviour needs in the classroom.
- My second line of enquiry was about how you ensure that pupils make the best possible progress in reading and mathematics from their starting points. When you took over as headteacher, just over a year ago, you identified that assessment had not been accurate in the past, particularly at the end of key

stage 1. You introduced standardised tests for reading and mathematics so that teachers have an accurate baseline from which to evaluate the progress pupils make. You identified that phonics is taught well in early years and key stage 1. However, although this has resulted in pupils being able to read words accurately and sometimes fluently, pupils do not always fully understand the book they are reading. You introduced 'word talk' at the start of every lesson so pupils explore the meaning of words. This has started to improve pupils' understanding of new words but teachers do not carefully check book choices of the most able readers in key stage 2. Consequently, some fluent readers can read most of the words accurately, but the book is beyond their level of understanding.

- You have rightly identified mathematics as an area for improvement in your current improvement plan. The mathematics leader is in the process of writing a sharply focused plan to further improve teaching and learning in mathematics. Pupils' ability to rapidly recall number facts has improved considerably in the last school year. However, there is not sufficient evidence in pupils' books to show how they apply their effective number skills in reasoning about which strategy to use to solve mathematical problems and why they have selected this strategy. Also, there is insufficient evidence in Year 1 books to show how pupils learn about shape, space and measures.
- My third line of enquiry was about how you are using your sports premium funding to improve pupils' participation in physical education (PE) lessons and extra-curricular sports. You tackled this very rapidly. The school previously used sports funding to employ an external company to teach all PE across the school. Consequently, pupils' skills in gymnastics and sports were underdeveloped due to inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. You have improved the PE curriculum by bringing in a qualified expert from the partner school. She has worked very successfully with a staff member at Saxlingham, who is currently training to be a qualified PE instructor. Consequently, the quality of teaching has improved in PE lessons, pupils' skills are improving and participation in after-school sports has increased. For example, 19 pupils took part in a recent cross-country event and one pupil has gone through to the county finals.
- My fourth line of enquiry was about how you are reducing persistent absence, as this has been high for the last two years. You are taking effective and robust action to raise attendance and reduce persistent absence. Current attendance is in line with the national average and persistent absence has reduced considerably since the last school year.
- We agreed a fifth line of enquiry because you were keen to explain how the curriculum has improved over the last year. You have taken effective action to broaden the range of visits and visitors to enrich the curriculum for pupils. Both parents and pupils spoke very enthusiastically about the increased opportunities to visit interesting places like the Houses of Parliament so pupils can learn at first-hand what it is like to be a citizen in modern Britain. Pupils also enjoyed the chance to hone their gymnastic and other skills by working with circus performers. They joined with pupils from the partner school in having special tuition from circus experts and then performed at the circus later in the day. Currently, the two schools are working together on the same theme, 'Cold Places'. This approach has brought staff together to plan learning opportunities

and check the quality of pupils' work across both schools. Although it is too soon to see the impact of an improved curriculum in pupils' books, it is clear from how enthusiastically they approach learning in the classroom that pupils' attitudes and application to learning has improved over the last year.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- School improvement plans are sharply focused on precisely what needs to improve and are time limited so actions are completed.
- Teaching and learning in mathematics continue to improve with clear evidence in key stage 2 books of how pupils are applying their calculation skills in reasoning about how to solve mathematical problems.
- Pupils in Year 1 have sufficient opportunities to learn about shape, space and measures in mathematics lessons.
- Teachers check the book choices of fluent readers in key stage 2 so they are a good match to the pupils' level of understanding.

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

Yours sincerely

Julie Winyard  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I spoke to you, the deputy headteacher, the SENCo, the governors, representatives from the local authority and Diocese of Norwich, teachers, support staff, pupils and parents. We observed learning and teaching in mathematics in all classes. I scrutinised a range of documents including your self-evaluation and school improvement plan. I scrutinised a range of pupils' books in lessons and with the mathematics leader. I scrutinised a range of safeguarding documentation and a sample of pupil records. I analysed Parent View, the online questionnaire for parents. There were no responses to the online questionnaires for pupils or staff.