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Ms Lynne Golding  
Headteacher  
Whatfield Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School  
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Whatfield  
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IP7 6QU

Dear Ms Golding

### **Short inspection of Whatfield Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 6 February 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 September 2013.

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

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

You are an effective headteacher who leads a team that is committed to meeting the needs of each pupil in the school. Parents and carers value the school highly. As one parent commented, 'The school provides a caring and nurturing setting in which children can thrive.' All the parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, would recommend the school.

Your school provides a curriculum which motivates the pupils and responds to their interests. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about some of their experiences, including the residential visit to Thorpe Woodlands, and their work based on the paintings of Thomas Gainsborough which culminated in a visit to Gainsborough House.

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. Parents said that the school ensures that pupils behave well. Pupils are respectful to both adults and each other. In lessons, they are motivated and work hard. These are all contributory factors to the strong progress that pupils consistently make.

Governors are passionate about the school and know it well. They work with you and your leaders to closely monitor the school's work and to identify priorities for school improvement. For example, governors can talk confidently about the impact of activities

funded by the pupil premium grant and the physical education (PE) and sport premium grant.

You are ensuring that the children have a good start in Reception within their mixed age and key stage class. Adults make effective use of questions to encourage pupils to develop ideas. For example, adults asked children in Reception to explain why they think a cheetah is well adapted to where it lives. Their workbooks show that they are accessing a rich curriculum which enables them to make strong progress from their starting points. The teaching of phonics is effective and ensures that children are well prepared for the screening check in Year 1.

The school is working closely with the partner school in its federation and other local schools. This is enabling resources to be pooled to provide training for staff, moderation of assessments and to provide activities to challenge the most able pupils.

In the previous inspection, you were tasked with improving writing standards by ensuring that pupils apply their writing skills in other subjects and by ensuring that most-able pupils work at the right level of difficulty. Small pupil numbers make comparisons with national averages unreliable. However, assessment information shows that the vast majority of pupils have made strong or rapid progress in recent years at the end of key stage 2. Pupils' workbooks show that current pupils make strong progress from their starting points, particularly in the development of grammar and punctuation skills.

Your evaluations of the school are accurate. They are informed by a secure range of evidence. You make effective use of external advisers to support your monitoring and evaluations. You have identified the need to further develop leadership of foundation subjects so that all subject leaders set consistently high expectations of pupils across the whole curriculum.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders, including governors, have ensured that there is a culture of safeguarding pupils. Staff are vigilant and know what to do if they have concerns about a pupil. Records of concern are well organised and enable leaders to monitor pupils closely.

Staff training is comprehensive. Regular safeguarding updates are provided for all staff to ensure that they understand school policies and procedures for keeping children safe. When new staff join the school, there is an induction programme which ensures that they understand their safeguarding responsibilities. When necessary, you work effectively with outside agencies and other schools to support pupils' needs.

Your procedures for checking the suitability of new members of staff to work with children are meticulously maintained.

You manage the shared facilities with the village hall and grounds effectively. You have evaluated potential risks and have appropriate measures to manage them so that pupils are safe.

Pupils of all ages told me that they feel safe at school, and parents and staff agree. Pupils know what bullying is, say that it is extremely rare, and know what to do if they have any concerns. Pupils know how to stay safe when using the internet and say that this is because of lessons the school provides about e-safety.

## **Inspection findings**

- At the start of the inspection, we agreed that I would look at how effectively leaders are ensuring that pupils make consistently strong progress in writing. This is because rates of progress at the end of key stage 2 have varied in recent years.
- Pupils' workbooks and assessment information show that pupils make strong progress in developing their writing skills. Teachers encourage pupils to evaluate their writing and identify where improvements are needed. Teachers encourage pupils to explore writing techniques and apply them independently. For example, in an upper key stage 2 lesson, pupils constructed poems which described abstract nouns using metaphors and expanded noun phrases.
- Leaders have introduced a more structured approach to the teaching of spelling. This results in activities being planned to fill gaps in pupils' knowledge of spelling rules and patterns. For younger pupils, particularly those who have joined the school recently, this includes opportunities to improve their phonic knowledge so that it can be applied when writing and reading.
- The quality of handwriting and presentation varies across the curriculum. In a few cases, teachers need to set higher expectations for the quality of pupils' work.
- My second line of enquiry was about how the curriculum was meeting the needs of all pupils in the context of mixed age and mixed key stage classes and small cohorts.
- There are some significant strengths in the curriculum. For example, we observed pupils excitedly engaging in composition in a music lesson using tuned and percussion instruments. In PE, pupils access high-quality teaching within lessons and in extra-curricular clubs. This contributes to the school's success in competitions. As one governor commented, when competing, 'the school punches above its weight'.
- Pupils enjoy the range of opportunities provided in the curriculum. They were keen to talk about their art work, science investigations and topics. All of the pupils interviewed could give examples of learning that they had enjoyed in a range of subjects.
- My final line of enquiry explored if the leaders have ensured that the rapid progress in the core curriculum, made by many pupils in recent years, is being maintained for current cohorts across the curriculum.
- The school's assessment information and pupils' workbooks confirmed that, for the vast majority of pupils, progress in reading, writing and mathematics continues to be strong across the school. Pupils' workbooks provided evidence that pupils access a broad curriculum, but also identified variations in the progress pupils made between subjects.
- Subject leaders monitor core subjects meticulously but agreed that they need to monitor progress in some foundation subjects more closely to ensure that all pupils

are being challenged sufficiently. For example, although workbooks provided evidence of coverage of history, there was not enough evidence to evaluate pupils' progress accurately. Similarly, the use of assessment is less well developed in foundation subjects than it is in the core curriculum.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- foundation subject leaders monitor each subject closely to ensure that pupils make consistently strong progress, and that there are high expectations for pupils' handwriting and presentation in all subjects.

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

Yours sincerely

Keith Pullen  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

You and I discussed the lines of enquiry for this inspection, the school's internal evaluation of its performance, plans for future improvement and information about progress and attainment of current pupils. Meetings were held with you and your governors, including the chair of governors, and your subject leaders. I also spoke to representatives of the local authority and the diocese, and your school improvement partner on the telephone.

I gathered a range of evidence to evaluate the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. This included joint observations of teaching and learning in all classes with you. We looked at a sample of pupils' current work across all subjects and across a wide range of abilities. I spoke informally to a number of pupils in classrooms about their learning and met more formally with a group of pupils to talk about their school experience and their workbooks.

Policies and procedures for the safeguarding of pupils were examined, including mandatory checks made during the recruitment of new staff and records relating to referrals made to external agencies. A discussion was held with you and your head of school as the school's designated safeguarding leads. The views of 27 parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, were taken into account. I also considered the views of staff and pupils who completed online surveys during the inspection.