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Mrs Susan Ilett-Coupe
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Ilett-Coupe

Short inspection of Kneesall CofE Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 8 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 February 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 know the school well. Together with other leaders, you have created a caring school where pupils are happy, feel safe and achieve well. You provide strong leadership by setting high expectations and ensuring that pupils have a well-rounded education. The school's distinctive ethos and strong values underpin your day-to-day work and provide the school community with a strong moral purpose. All leaders and staff share your vision. They work in unison to drive improvements with a strong sense of teamwork. Staff feel motivated and respected. They spoke positively about how your leadership has helped to move the school forward.

At the previous inspection you were asked to improve the teaching, ensuring that all pupils were sufficiently challenged and activities were well matched to their abilities. Since then you have provided staff with relevant training and purchased resources to support pupils' learning. During the inspection we saw pupils enjoying their learning. They cooperate well together and are keen to answer questions in class. Pupils said that their teachers make learning fun and they get help in class when they need it. Nevertheless, middle- and higher-ability pupils in key stage 2 do not make enough progress from their starting points. Teachers throughout the school do not use all the available information about the starting points of groups of pupils effectively to check they make good progress.

Children in the early years achieve well, with a greater number of pupils than

previously leaving the Reception class in 2017 ready for Year 1. Pupils' attainment in the phonics screening check in Year 1 has also been high. Pupils make good progress during key stage 1. They achieve standards at the end of Year 2 that are broadly in line with national averages in reading, writing and mathematics. By the end of key stage 2, pupils typically reach standards above the national average in writing. In 2017, their attainment was also above the national average in reading and mathematics.

Pupils, parents and carers are extremely proud of the school. They said you lead and manage the school well. This is reflected in very positive feedback from parents. They spoke emphatically about the community that you and the school's other leaders have created. They feel valued and an integral part of their child's education. As one parent commented, 'The school shares our family views and I could not wish for my child to attend a better school.'

Pupils spoke confidently about what makes their school special. They talked fondly of the relationships that are a key feature of this nurturing school. 'It's only a little school but it's good because we all get along with each other,' said one pupil. Older pupils establish strong relationships with younger ones. They look after each other throughout the school day. For example, at lunchtime, older and younger pupils sit side by side helping and supporting each other with manners and social skills. Pupils are polite and welcoming to visitors. Teachers encourage pupils to make choices and understand right from wrong. Pupils develop resilience and challenge themselves in their work.

You strive to ensure that the school promotes a purposeful and positive learning environment. Vibrant displays show pupils' work in classrooms and around the school. Staff work hard to ensure that the curriculum is both broad and balanced. They ensure that pupils have a wide range of opportunities to develop their creative and sporting skills. Pupils also enjoy the many trips and visits that support their learning and provide them with a wider view of the world. Pupils in the choir regularly perform away from the school and recently performed at Newark's theatre and at a local holiday park. Pupils choose which sporting clubs they would like to participate in and you try to support these requests, in liaison with your partnership secondary schools. You recognise the challenges of being a small, rural school and are determined to ensure that pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. To this end, you provide opportunities for pupils to learn about and understand other communities. For example, pupils visited the 'Living Faiths' project in Leicester.

Governors are highly committed to the school and work with you to nurture and protect its special ethos. The governing body has a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Governors know how well the school is doing compared to other schools nationally. Their understanding of how well different groups of pupils are doing is not as strong. Leaders and other staff know individual pupils extremely well, but do not provide the governing body with a detailed overview of how well different groups are doing.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You and the other staff ensure that pupils are safe. Leaders ensure that records are detailed and accurate. All staff receive regular and effective training in safeguarding. They are vigilant about any of the many indicators of potential abuse. Staff expressed confidence that if they were to report a concern it would be dealt with in a timely, effective way by the designated safeguarding lead. They also understand their responsibility to report any concern immediately.

Pupils I met said that they felt very safe in school. They were keen to tell me how adults teach them about potential dangers, such as crossing roads, strangers and even the procedures for the public footpath that runs alongside the school playground. They also demonstrated a good understanding about how to keep themselves safe online or when using mobile telephones.

Inspection findings

- One of the lines of enquiry for this inspection was the progress that boys in the early years make in writing. The proportion of children who reach a good level of development at the end of early years has been consistently above the national average, but boys are less likely to reach this standard. In 2017, fewer boys than girls achieved the early learning goal in writing and the gap was greater than that seen nationally. You have taken some steps to tackle this gap. Teachers are successful in providing rich, varied activities that offer children the chance to learn effectively both indoors and outside.
- The learning environment in the early years is well resourced and well organised. Opportunities to develop writing and physical skills in the early years are plentiful. During our walk around school, we saw children using scissor skills effectively to make 'bug houses'. Other children used markers to stamp and write numbers to 20 and beyond. Even so, the learning environment does not ensure that all groups of children are challenged in all aspects of their learning.
- Leaders work with feeder settings to ensure that more children have adequate skills when they join the school, to support their development. Leaders, however, have not fully evaluated the impact of these strategies on the school's provision. They do not ensure that children who join the early years with skills that are above those typical for their age are given tasks and activities that fully stretch and challenge them.
- A second line of enquiry was to consider the actions you have taken to improve pupils' progress in reading and mathematics by the end of key stage 2. I particularly looked at the level of challenge teachers provide for the most able pupils. In 2016, the school's performance dipped below national averages. Too few pupils made good progress in reading and mathematics. You took effective action to tackle this issue. In 2017, the progress that pupils made by the end of key stage 2 in these subjects rose to be in line with that found nationally. You have continued to improve the teaching of reading, for example by bringing in new resources and introducing new approaches to the teaching of reading. There

are early signs that pupils enjoy reading more and are making faster progress.

- In mathematics, pupils' ability to master key concepts and skills is particularly evident in books in key stage 2. Pupils apply their skills well and are developing their skills in reasoning and language to explain their thinking.
- The most able pupils relish the challenges presented to them. Teachers are beginning to adapt their planning by looking at what pupils know or can do. Pupils are taught the 'importance of being stuck'. As one pupil commented, 'We get help to improve, to make you even better, so it's a challenge.' This attitude is not consistent in all classes, however.
- The school continues to look outwards to see how it can improve further. You encourage leaders at all levels to develop their own subject knowledge through training and by supporting each other. Some leaders also work to support other schools. The headteacher has recently become an executive headteacher across two schools and is a local leader of education.
- Leaders of mathematics and English regularly evaluate pupils' work to ensure that they are making good progress. Not all leaders, however, use the information they have about the attainment and progress of different groups of pupils. This means they are not able to consider how well different groups of pupils are achieving throughout school. Last year you introduced a new system to track pupils' progress. You now acknowledge that this system did not provide you or the governing body with the level of detail you needed. You have replaced this with a different system, but leaders do not consistently use it to find out how much progress different groups of pupils make.
- The proportion of pupils working at greater depth in reading and mathematics is improving. Leaders do not always act promptly, however, to ensure that teachers use the information they have about pupils' starting points to set learning that is sufficiently challenging.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they use assessment systems rigorously and effectively to provide the governing body with clear information about the progress of all groups of pupils
- teachers throughout the school consistently use information about pupils' starting points to check that they are all making good progress.

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

Yours sincerely

Shaheen Hussain
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, and with the leaders of English, mathematics and the early years. Four members of the governing body, including the chair, met with me. I gathered the views of parents through responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I also met with a group of pupils who spoke to me about their experiences of school.

We also visited classrooms together to evaluate the impact of teaching on pupils' learning. With subject leaders, we undertook a review of pupils' books to consider the quality of pupils' work over time. A range of documentary evidence was evaluated, including documents relating to safeguarding and governance.