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20 March 2018

Mr Steve Creasey
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Creasey

Short inspection of Ashill Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 8 March 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 June 2014.

This school continues to be good.

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

Since your appointment as headteacher in September 2015, you have built a cohesive and energetic leadership team that shares your dedication and drive for continual improvement. Leaders are developing their skills well, using their 'scrapbooks' to show how they are improving their areas of responsibility. You, leaders and governors are accurate in your evaluation of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Governors demonstrate a strong sense of commitment to, and expertise in, their roles. As a new headteacher, you ask for support from the local authority when it is required, and act upon this advice appropriately. The school has good leadership capacity to improve further.

You have ensured that the school's new tracking system enables pupils' progress to be robustly checked using accurate assessments made by teachers. This highlights pupils who are at risk of underachievement so that individualised support can be put in place quickly and effectively. Additionally, you are developing nurture provision to meet the social and emotional needs among an increasing number of pupils. The quality of teaching and learning is monitored rigorously. Teachers' skills are improved through effective training and helpful support from experienced school practitioners.

It is clear that you have the highest expectations of staff and pupils. In return, you

are proud of your dedicated staff and hardworking, well-behaved pupils. Relationships between adults and pupils are warm and respectful. Staff know every child well. As a result, pupils are achieving well, academically and socially, in this welcoming, calm school. Pupils state that they enjoy coming to school and partaking in the stimulating curriculum, including the extra-curricular activities.

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. All parents who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, agreed with all the statements. One typically commented:

'There are high expectations of behaviour, lots of praise and celebrations of successes and clear consequences. The staff all know my children well and have positive relationships with them, going above and beyond to support them both academically and emotionally.'

Strong, effective leadership in the early years ensures that children make a good start to their school life. Expectations are high, routines are clear and tasks are well matched to the children's needs and interests. As a result, children make good progress from their various starting points. They are able to develop their own learning. I observed a small group of children deciding to perform a play with the puppets they had just made, enhancing their speaking and listening skills. Children are well prepared for Year 1.

You have ensured that the most able pupils are sufficiently challenged, which was an area to develop from the previous inspection report. All ability groups have opportunities to complete a variety of challenges in English and mathematics to demonstrate their understanding, including the most able pupils. This is enabling pupils to make good and better progress from their starting points.

The progress that pupils make from the end of key stage 1 to the end of key stage 2 in writing is a strength of the school. It has been in the highest 20% nationally for two years. In 2017, pupils' attainment in writing at the end of Year 2 was in the highest 10% nationally. In addition, all pupils met the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check. However, you acknowledge that there is more work to be done to ensure that English and mathematics outcomes are consistently high across the school. During our learning walks and while looking at books, we could see that there were some missed opportunities for developing pupils' use of mathematics in other subjects. Improvements in the teaching and learning of English grammar, punctuation and spelling have not yet had time to show a full impact on pupils' outcomes at the end of Year 6.

Safeguarding is effective.

The culture of safeguarding in your school is strong. As the designated safeguarding lead, you ensure that all staff and governors receive regular, up-to-date training. Relevant documentation is well organised and of the highest quality. Child protection referrals are followed up appropriately. The pupils who went swimming during the inspection were covered by high-quality risk assessments for the bus journeys and their time at the local leisure centre.

Pupils feel safe in school and have a good understanding of how to keep safe. This is because the curriculum provides appropriate opportunities for them to learn how to keep safe, including when using the internet. Pupils have a clear understanding of bullying. They told me that bullying is rare in the school. They are adamant that, if they have any concerns, then adults will deal with them effectively.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry was to consider how leaders are addressing the weaknesses in outcomes for mathematics and English grammar, punctuation and spelling. This was because, even though the progress pupils made from the end of Year 2 to the end of Year 6 in mathematics improved in 2017, it was not as strong as that in reading and writing. Outcomes in English grammar, punctuation and spelling at the end of Year 6 were below those seen nationally.
- Leaders are taking appropriate actions to raise progress in mathematics across the whole school. High-quality professional development has improved teachers' skills so that they challenge pupils' mathematical understanding more effectively. We observed Year 5 and Year 6 pupils explaining how to calculate difficult problems when converting miles to kilometres. They gave clear explanations of their thinking and used the correct mathematical vocabulary. The various challenges provided for each task ensure that all groups of pupils, including the most able, are now making good or better progress in mathematics. We saw evidence of this when checking the school's tracking system and looking in pupils' books. Effective support is quickly put in place for any pupil who is underachieving in order to improve their progress. This is tailored well to the needs of each individual pupil.
- Leaders and teachers are developing pupils' grammar, punctuation and spelling skills well. The work in pupils' books shows that they are learning specific rules to develop their understanding in these three areas. We observed Year 2 pupils using apostrophes correctly when recording sentences about who an object belonged to. Pupils' recorded work shows that they are applying these skills correctly in their writing. However, this improved understanding has not yet had time to affect the results of tests at the end of Year 6.
- My second line of enquiry was to explore the opportunities pupils receive to enhance their English and mathematical skills across the curriculum. This was highlighted as an area to develop in the previous inspection. We could easily identify in books and high-quality displays the many opportunities pupils have to develop their English skills across the curriculum. For example, we observed Reception pupils producing labels for the dinosaur traps they had constructed. We noted that Years 5 and 6 pupils had written letters and diary extracts about their work on the Second World War. Additionally, pupils read good-quality fiction and non-fiction texts related to their topic.
- We saw fewer opportunities for pupils to develop their mathematical skills across the curriculum. However, where these were seen, they developed pupils' skills well. For example, pupils in Years 5 and 6 had extended their mathematical knowledge to complete tasks on time zones and climate graphs during their work on North America. We observed pupils in Years 1 and 2 discussing what

dinosaurs ate and deciding where to place each one on a Venn diagram. We agreed that pupils required more opportunities to enhance their mathematical skills across the curriculum to develop their understanding further.

- My third line of enquiry was to look at how leaders were improving pupils' understanding of diversity within modern Britain, which was an area to improve from the last inspection. Leaders and governors ensure that pupils respect any differences between themselves within school and the local community. The curriculum now offers pupils more opportunities to learn about different cultures and beliefs, including trips, visitors into school and multicultural days. Teachers' planning clearly shows appropriate links to many learning opportunities about cultural diversity.
- The school is also fostering links with local schools and those further afield to enable pupils to meet and correspond with pupils from different backgrounds. The school is proud to be part of the Norwich Schools of Sanctuary, enabling pupils to understand the plight of refugees. The pupils I spoke to stated that 'In this school everyone is equal, and we all work together in the same place at the same time.' The school is addressing the area of cultural diversity well.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils are offered more opportunities to develop their mathematical skills across the curriculum
- the approaches that are improving pupils' learning in English grammar, punctuation and spelling are fully implemented to improve pupils' outcomes at the end of Year 6.

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 Harrison
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, other leaders, governors and a representative of the local authority. I spoke to a group of pupils. I looked at a range of documentation, including information about the school's self-evaluation and plans for future improvement. Additionally, I examined policies and procedures for the safeguarding of pupils, including the school's single central record of pre-employment checks on staff. With either you or the senior teacher, I visited all

classrooms within the school to observe pupils' learning and scrutinised the work in pupils' books. The views of 22 parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey were taken into account. The written views of 12 parents from the free-text service were also considered.