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Mrs Emma Hamilton-Smith
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Hamilton-Smith

Short inspection of Swanton Abbott Community Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 20 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. Your aspirations for this small, village school are shared by staff, governors, parents, carers and pupils. The school is a welcoming, happy place.

Since the previous inspection, there have been a number of changes in leadership and teaching staff. You were appointed as the head of school in September 2016. Governors value your leadership skills, dedication and drive for school improvement. When the opportunity arose recently for an acting headteacher, they had no hesitation in offering you the appointment. You already knew the school's strengths and where it needed to improve further, and have rapidly put additional systems and procedures in place. These are beginning to have a positive impact on school development. This includes strengthening further the role of the new mathematics leader. Additionally, with support from the local authority, you have introduced an effective assessment system, which clearly shows the progress pupils make in each year group.

You and your governors are strongly committed to ensuring that teaching and learning are good or better across the school, and that pupils in key stage 2 make the best possible progress from their various starting points. This includes the progress of the most able pupils, which was an area to address from the previous inspection report. At the same time, you are maintaining and improving the high-quality provision in the early years and key stage 1.

Parents are positive about the school. The majority of parents who provided responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, indicated that they would recommend the school to other parents. One parent stated, 'An amazing little school [where] all of the pupils are happy and thriving both emotionally and academically', while another commented that you are 'implementing many new and interesting ways to educate the children'.

Pupils behave well, both around the school and when they are learning. They benefit from a stimulating curriculum, which develops their enjoyment for learning. Pupils I spoke to value the variety of sporting and musical activities that the school provides. They talked enthusiastically about their 'highly commended performance' at the recent Norfolk Music Festival and about learning yoga. We watched Year 5 and Year 6 pupils enjoying their new stress-free yoga sessions.

Children in the early years are given a good start to their school life, which is followed up in key stage 1. Standards in both key stages are improving and have remained similar to or higher than national figures for at least two years. However, you and your governors are well aware that standards have not been as strong in key stage 2 during this time, especially in mathematics, which was also an area to develop in the previous inspection report. You are rapidly improving teaching and learning in mathematics in key stage 2 to improve pupils' outcomes. You are also focusing on improving pupils' English grammar skills to help improve standards in writing across the school. Teachers and teaching assistants know each child well and ensure that any underachieving pupils are provided with targeted support to meet their individual needs. You and governors are aware that the characteristics of individual pupils impact on statutory results, due to the small number in each cohort.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your governors are well aware of statutory safeguarding duties. You ensure that high-quality procedures and documents are in place to keep pupils safe. Governors monitor that all staff have the appropriate training and recruitment checks. As a result, staff are suitably qualified and confident to implement the school's safeguarding policies.

Pupils who spoke to me said that bullying is not a problem in the school, and that there are adults who would help them if they had any concerns. Pupils learn how to be safe when using the internet. They discussed confidently how to be safe on the narrow roads in the locality, especially during the recent heavy snowfall.

Inspection findings.

- In order to ascertain that the school remains good, my first line of enquiry was to investigate how leaders are improving teaching and learning in mathematics to improve pupils' standards in key stage 2. This is because, in 2016 and 2017, the progress that Year 6 pupils made at the end of key stage 2 was significantly low,

and too few pupils reached the expected and higher standards.

- You were very disappointed with the 2017 results. We discussed individual pupils in this very small cohort and looked in their books. We could see that, as the Year 6 teacher, you have focused on filling gaps in pupils' learning. These pupils made expected and better progress during Year 6, but this was not enough to make up for the legacy of underachievement in previous years.
- With the new mathematics leader, you are quickly implementing new teaching and learning approaches, including the effective use of practical resources across the school. You are ensuring appropriate coverage of the mathematics curriculum in each year group. Recent and continuing professional development, alongside the implementation of a new calculation policy, is improving teachers' subject knowledge and skills, which is improving pupils' learning. In key stage 2, the focus on filling any gaps in pupils' previous learning, and improving multiplication and reasoning skills, is enabling pupils to become more knowledgeable and confident learners. We saw Year 6 pupils discussing a variety of mathematical strategies to understand a grid, which was an introductory task to algebra.
- Evidence from the school's new progress assessment system and work in pupils' books indicate that pupils are making expected and better progress from their September starting points. A greater proportion are working at age-related expectations and the higher standard across key stage 2, especially in Year 6. However, the new mathematics strategies are in the early stage of implementation and have not yet had time to impact on statutory results. We agreed that pupils require more opportunities to use their skills in real-life contexts to develop their understanding further.
- My second line of enquiry looked at the school's provision for writing across the school. This was because, in 2017, the progress pupils made from the end of Year 2 to the end of Year 6 declined. I also wanted to see whether there was evidence that the high standards in writing in key stage 1 were likely to be maintained.
- You are ensuring that teachers are delivering discrete English grammar lessons across both key stages to improve standards in English grammar, punctuation and spelling. Teachers then encourage pupils to use these skills to improve their writing. We saw proof of this in pupils' work in books and high-quality displays. Years 3 and 4 pupils produced appropriate fronted adverbials in their writing from the perspective of a 'mouse-eye view'. Additionally, pupils also encounter many opportunities to develop their writing at length in other subjects as they engage with many interesting fictional and non-fictional texts. Evidence collected during the inspection indicates that Year 6 pupils, including the most able pupils, are making good and better progress in their writing skills. A greater proportion of pupils are working at the expected and higher standards across the school, especially in Year 6.
- Pupils in key stage 1 use their knowledge of phonics to support their spelling well. The standard of Year 1 and Year 2 pupils' writing in the Florence Nightingale display was high. Pupils' work in books indicates that an even higher proportion of pupils are working at age-related expectations and greater depth

than previously. Standards in writing are being maintained and improved on.

- My final focus was on leadership and management and on whether leaders and the governing body have the capacity to ensure further school improvement. You and your governors have correctly identified the school's strengths and areas to develop. The school's self-evaluation is accurate. You are establishing an effective leadership team and rapidly strengthening your skills and those of other leaders. Together, you have put in place appropriate actions for school improvement, which are beginning to show some positive impact within a very short time. An example of this is the implementation of the new teaching approaches in mathematics and English grammar, which are already showing improvement in pupils' learning and outcomes, especially in key stage 2.
- The school's new assessment system, devised with support from the local authority, supplements the attainment information you already collect and clearly indicates the progress that pupils make. This evidence, combined with discussions during staff and pupil progress meetings, identifies where pupils require additional support, which is quickly put in place. You are beginning to use effective monitoring and accurate analysis of this progress information to inform the next actions to drive school improvement. You, your leaders and governors are demonstrating good capacity for sustained school improvement.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the new teaching and learning approaches in mathematics are further developed so that pupils in key stage 2 make the best possible progress and that a greater proportion reach the expected and higher standards
- there are more opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical reasoning skills in real-life contexts to further develop their understanding
- the new leadership team fully evaluates the effectiveness of its new strategies to ensure further school improvement.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, 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. I visited all classrooms in the school to observe pupils' learning and scrutinised the work in pupils' books. The views of 29 parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View and the written views of 22 parents from the free-text service were taken into account.