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Mrs Helen Pye
Headteacher
Sutton on the Forest Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School
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Sutton-on-the-Forest
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North Yorkshire
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Dear Mrs Pye

Short inspection of Sutton on the Forest Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 2 May 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 2013.

This school continues to be good.

You and your staff have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Following the retirement of the previous headteacher, an interim headteacher was appointed in September 2017, shared with a nearby school. Since your appointment as substantive headteacher in April 2018, you have swiftly reviewed all areas of the school. The local authority and the Diocese of York supported you very well in managing successfully a difficult transition in school leadership. You appreciate and value this support as you move the school forward in line with your vision for excellence.

You acted quickly and correctly identified and prioritised areas for improvement. Since the last inspection, the school has recruited a new chair, and vice-chair, of the governing body, and a new parent governor. You and the governors carefully restructured the staffing of the school to take effect from September 2018. As a result, leadership and management of all areas of the school have been strengthened further.

Your passion, enthusiasm and commitment are pivotal in the continuous development of the school. In a very short space of time, you communicated effectively to parents, the clarity of your vision for the school. As a result, relationships with parents are strong and they overwhelmingly support your efforts for further school improvement. Staff morale is high. You have established a very caring, inclusive, warm and loving environment where staff and pupils feel valued and part of a family.

Since the last inspection and your appointment in 2018, school leaders and staff have

put the children and pupils in your school at the heart of what you do. Leaders' determination and passion have ensured that all staff focus not only on the progress of pupils, but also on their whole-school experience. As a result, outcomes of pupils have been strong, overall, since the last inspection.

Governors have a wide range of skills and expertise. Recent governor appointments have strengthened the governing body further. Governors are committed to continuous school improvement and are routinely involved in school life. As a result, they provide robust challenge and support, to you and your staff, and know the strengths of the school and areas for improvement well.

At the last inspection, the school was asked to raise staff expectations of pupils and increase the level of challenge for most-able pupils, particularly in mathematics. Leaders were also advised to improve the opportunities for pupils in Years 2 and 3 to write independently and at length. School leaders acted swiftly to bring about improvement in these areas. They have focused strongly on staff development. Good and outstanding teaching practice has been shared, not only within your school, but also through effective collaborations with other schools and partnerships.

Information from assessing pupils is now used more effectively to plan work that is appropriately challenging. Improvements in writing are evident across all year groups. Even so, you know that increasing the proportion of pupils who reach the higher standards by the end of key stages 1 and 2 and strengthening the quality of teaching in writing in Years 2 and 3 are important next steps for bringing about further school improvement.

At the last inspection, leaders were also asked to develop the skills of the new staff team so they contribute to school improvement through checking how well teaching is helping pupils to learn. School leaders ensured that staff and governors attended relevant training through the local authority and the school partnerships with the Easingwold Partnership and the Northern Star Teaching School Alliance. As a result, staff at all levels are increasingly involved in the monitoring of teaching and learning and are confident in using pupils' prior knowledge when planning learning activities. Consequently, teaching is strong or better in all year groups.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and governors have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed. There is a strong safeguarding culture in the school. You and your staff know the pupils well and the monitoring of pupils' welfare is thorough and detailed.

You have ensured that staff and governors receive appropriate training in child protection, including the dangers of radicalisation. All staff know what to do if they have any concerns about the children and pupils in your school. You recently introduced an electronic system of recording safeguarding concerns to strengthen school procedures further. As a result, the school shares information with external agencies effectively. Leaders take action swiftly and monitor the impact of actions closely.

You and your business administrator ensure that you carry out appropriate checks on the suitability of all staff who work with pupils. Your records are detailed and thorough. Your experienced safeguarding governor monitors all areas of safeguarding regularly.

Pupils are very polite and respectful to each other and to staff. They play well together and are considerate of each other. The relationships between staff and pupils are very strong. As a result, behaviour in lessons and conduct around the school environment are exemplary.

Pupils say that they feel safe in school and know what to do and who to go to if they have any concerns. They also say that bullying is extremely rare and when it does happen, teachers deal with it effectively. Inspection evidence and the views of parents and staff also support this. Pupils value the support they receive from staff and the way they are encouraged to look after their physical health.

Inspection findings

- Since the last inspection, outcomes for all pupils overall have remained strong. At the end of Year 6, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics combined has been consistently above national averages. In 2017, there was an improvement in the progress that pupils made in reading and mathematics.
- The outcomes of pupils in the phonics screening checks at the end of Year 1 and Year 2 have been consistently above national averages. The attainment of pupils in science at the end of both key stage 1 and key stage 2 has been consistently above national averages. The proportion of children achieving good levels of development in early years has also been consistently above national averages. Inspection evidence and current school assessment information indicates that strong attainment and progress continue for current children and pupils in the school.
- At the end of Year 6, more pupils achieved the higher standard in writing in 2017 than in 2016. However, the proportion doing so remained below the national average. No pupils achieved the higher standard in reading, writing and mathematics combined in 2017. Inspection evidence indicates that the proportion of pupils working at the expected and higher standard in writing in the current Year 6 has improved further. You agreed with me that, although there is now more appropriate challenge for the most able pupils across key stage 1 and key stage 2, there is still work to do in this area.
- Teaching assistants support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils well. They work closely with classroom teachers and use effective questioning and encourage pupils to work independently.
- Since the last inspection and your appointment in 2018, school leaders have strengthened further monitoring systems which show that the quality of teaching is good and better in the vast majority of lessons. You have successfully widened the range of staff involved in the frequent monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning. You have introduced pupil progress meetings and, together with staff, you check the impact on the quality of teaching and the progress of pupils. Teachers use targeted questioning effectively to probe understanding and support pupils' progress.

- During our joint scrutiny of pupils' books and visits to lessons, we were able to confirm that pupils have increased opportunities to do challenging activities in mathematics. For example, through the newly introduced initiatives of 'think it' and 'solve it' by the member of staff coordinating mathematics, pupils have access to more challenging reasoning and problem-solving tasks. Pupils of all abilities enjoy the challenges and show an enthusiasm for mathematics. Consequently, all pupils, including the most able, make strong progress from their starting points.
- Through joint inspection activities, we were also able to confirm that pupils have more opportunities to write independently and at length, in a range of subjects, including English. For example, in science, pupils use their extended writing to evaluate the outcomes of their investigations. Pupils are confident readers and apply their phonics skills in their writing well. You swiftly introduced a range of initiatives to strengthen writing across all year groups. For example, in Year 6, staff use pictorial resources to inspire and motivate pupils in writing more imaginative and descriptive stories using metaphors and similes. You and your staff have correctly identified the need to maintain the focus on writing across all year groups. Consequently, current school assessment information indicates that the quality of writing is improving rapidly in key stage 2. The rate of improvement in Years 2 and 3 is slower but increasing in pace. You agreed with me that more work is needed in this area.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the teaching of writing for all pupils continues to improve, especially for pupils in Years 2 and 3
- the proportion of most able pupils who achieve the higher standard, both at key stage 1 and key stage 2, continues to increase.

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

Yours sincerely

Dimitris Spiliotis
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, your staff and governors. I also held a meeting with the local authority school improvement partner and the representative from the diocese.

I spoke to a range of pupils and parents. I listened to pupils read and together we conducted tours of the school and lessons, looking at pupils' work and observing their learning. I also, alongside yourself and other staff, conducted a scrutiny of pupils' work in a range of subjects.

I scrutinised and evaluated a range of documents relating to safeguarding, behaviour, attendance and school improvement. I took account of the 38 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including the 36 extended responses from parents. I also took account of the 20 responses to the pupil questionnaire and the seven responses to the staff questionnaire.