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Miss Jemma Ramsay
St Oswald's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School
Heslington Lane
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Dear Miss Ramsay

Short inspection of St Oswald's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 5 June 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.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

The ethos of St Oswald's ensures that this is an inclusive school. You know the pupils well and have a good understanding of the needs of your families. Parents are overwhelmingly positive and appreciate the welcoming atmosphere of the school. A particular strength is the school's capacity to accommodate a transient population of pupils that regularly come and go, many of them from service families. The support for these pupils ensures that they quickly settle in and soon become an integral part of the school community.

The school is currently going through a time of change. With the retirement of the previous headteacher and the absence of significant leaders you are managing the school through a difficult time. It is to your credit that during this turbulence you have continued to retain high staff morale. Staff who completed the online survey were unanimous in their support for your leadership and all are proud to be a member of staff at the school.

Pupils told me that they value the sporting and creative activities available to them and they clearly enjoy coming to school each day. They believe behaviour to be

good and consider that teachers implement the school's behaviour policy fairly and consistently. The good behaviour of pupils was observed in lessons where they show a keenness and enthusiasm for learning.

Since the school's previous inspection, pupils' achievement, particularly in mathematics and writing at the end of each key stage, has been inconsistent. Attainment in mathematics at the end of key stage 1 has been in the bottom 20% of schools for at least two years. The progress pupils make in writing from their starting points to the end of key stage 2 has also been in the bottom 20% for at least two years. The progress pupils made in mathematics last year was below average when compared to other pupils nationally.

Governors have shown a commitment to secure strong leadership for the school by deferring the appointment of a new headteacher until they could find the right person for St Oswald's. They are aware that outcomes in writing and mathematics across the school need to improve. They are involved in pupil progress meetings and have a keen interest in how well individuals are doing and understand the circumstances why they might not be making the progress they should. Governors' strategic view of how well groups of pupils are doing when measured from their starting points and compared to the national averages is less secure.

Safeguarding is effective.

Pupils told me that they feel safe in school and are confident in confiding in an adult if they are worried. Nearly all parents and carers concur with this view. Pupils understand how to stay safe in different situations, including when using the internet. They have a good understanding of what constitutes bullying and the procedures for dealing with it should it occur.

You and your leaders have created a safe culture to take care of the school's pupils and ensure that procedures are effectively implemented to protect them. You, your staff and governors understand their obligations for safeguarding and take appropriate action when necessary. You liaise with outside agencies and this provides pupils and families with the support they need. Procedures and policies are fit for purpose. You ensure that all members of staff are checked for their suitability to work with children.

You are vigilant in ensuring that pupils attend school regularly and have tightened up procedures for registering late arrivals so pupils understand that punctuality is a life skill. There are systems in place to follow up absences on the first day. Where necessary, you involve external agencies to support you.

Inspection findings

- Following the school's previous inspection, the school was tasked with raising the standards at the end of key stage 2 by improving the quality of teaching so it is at least good.

- The school is currently taking part in a research project to improve writing. Pupils' books indicate that this is having a positive impact, ensuring that pupils achieve at least standards expected for their age in Years 5 and 6. Pupils' writing demonstrates a good grasp of punctuation, spelling and grammar. The rate of progress pupils make over time is not always as fast as it could be. You and your staff are aware of this and have already modified the approach to teaching writing to ensure that pupils' progress is more rapid.
- Pupils make good progress in their writing at key stage 1. They quickly develop the independence to write without the support of a writing frame to help them structure their writing. They use vocabulary effectively, for example when writing instructions using imperative verbs and are able to set their work out accurately using bullet points.
- During the inspection, we discussed the school's approach to the teaching of mathematics. You and your leaders had already identified that pupils were coming through the school with gaps in knowledge and understanding. To address this, the school has embraced a 'maths mastery' approach to help deepen pupils' understanding of mathematical concepts.
- Our observations together showed that these gaps in understanding are still evident in the older pupils. Pupils' misconceptions are not always addressed quickly and so pupils sometimes carry out tasks without the basic skills to ensure that they are mathematically accurate and make the progress they should.
- Pupils' mathematics books in key stage 2 show that the school's focus on embedding pupils' mathematical understanding is well practised through exercises to secure fluency. Pupils are developing their mathematical reasoning well and are now recording the rationale for answers to their calculations. However, books show that there is little challenge for the most able pupils.
- The teaching of mathematics in key stage 1 has also been focused on ensuring that pupils have a good understanding of the basic mathematical concepts. You feel confident that this is proving to be effective in securing better outcomes at the end of the key stage. Lessons we observed together, for example, showed that learning was well planned to deepen pupils' understanding of multiplication. Pupils' books show that progress is still not secure and, as in key stage 2, there is a lack of challenge for the most able pupils.
- Most pupils say that they enjoy reading, although younger pupils would like more choice about the books they read in school. Pupils who did not achieve the expected standard in phonics at the end of key stage 1 still lack confidence in using and applying the skills to decode unknown words and gain a full understanding of what they are reading. The most able older readers reflect on authorial style and talk confidently on how they apply this to their own writing.
- The leadership of subjects is devolved to small teams and some senior members of these teams are currently absent. Your leaders show an enthusiastic commitment to the school's new approaches to the teaching of mathematics and writing. However, less experienced leaders' understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses when compared to the national picture is not well understood. This makes it difficult for them to have a clear picture of the impact

on pupil outcomes when evaluating these new initiatives.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- improve the quality of teaching, particularly in writing and mathematics, so pupils make faster progress by:
 - teachers responding more quickly to address misconceptions and move learning on
 - using assessment to plan activities which challenge the most able
- develop the skills of subject leaders so they:
 - have an accurate overview of how well pupils are progressing when compared to the national average
 - can evaluate the impact on the achievement of groups of pupils when monitoring and evaluating new initiatives.

I am copying this letter to the chairs 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 York. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Karen Heath
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, and subject leaders for mathematics and writing, to discuss aspects of the school's work. You shared your own evaluation of the effectiveness of the school and your improvement plans. Together, we observed several lessons, including writing and mathematics. With subject leaders, I looked at pupils' mathematics and writing books.

I reviewed a range of documents, including those relating to the safety and welfare of children. I spoke to pupils about behaviour, safety and their enjoyment of school. There were no responses to the pupil online survey. I listened to some pupils in Years 1, 3 and 6 read and discussed their enjoyment and experience of reading. I observed the provision in the school's breakfast club. I considered the 46 responses from parents to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey for parents, as well as parents' written comments.

I met with the two chairs of governors and two other members of the governing body as well as a representative from the local authority. I considered the views of the eight staff who responded to Ofsted's staff survey.

