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Mr Christopher Allen  
Executive Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Allen

### **Short inspection of Colkirk Church of England Primary Academy**

Following my visit to the school on 26 September 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in 2013.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in specific areas. This may indicate that the school has improved significantly overall. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection will be a section 5 inspection.

The school has made significant improvement since becoming part of the Unity Federation with you as executive headteacher. You appointed a head of school who knows the school and its community exceptionally well. Consequently, the head of school works very closely and effectively with parents and carers, providing them with support when needed and making sure that they take a full part in, and are regularly informed about, their children's education. One parent described this support as, 'above and beyond what would be expected.' Parents made a point of seeking me out at the start of the inspection to tell me how thrilled they are with the school and the high-quality care and education their children receive.

You, and the head of school, make rigorous and accurate assessments of pupils' progress from their various starting points. A high proportion of pupils join the school at different times during the school year. Your thorough assessment on entry of where they are in their learning enables teachers to ensure that pupils 'hit the ground running' and make strong progress continuously. Work in pupils' books that we looked at together indicates a high-quality curriculum with strong achievement

in all subject areas. For example, in a project about the Vikings, pupils learned about invasion and carried out in-depth local studies of Viking activities and influences in Norfolk.

Your self-evaluation is accurate, and the supporting evidence for your judgements is useful and concise. However, not all of the areas you identify for development flow into your single change plan or your bite-size improvement plans. You have rightly identified that mathematics remains an area for further improvement and that not all pupils in key stage 2 are selecting books to read that are appropriate for their level of understanding.

Pupils love their school. They describe the teachers as 'amazing' and say, 'They always encourage you. They are there to help you get better. Everything I do has improved.' Pupils say that behaviour is mostly good: 'Because everyone is really kind and encouraging. I have lots of friends. If you fall over, your friends rush to help you.' They talk about a very few pupils finding it difficult to behave well, but say that this does not interrupt their learning in class.

Staff are really pleased to be working at the school because the head of school ensures that there is a strong team approach and effective support. Teachers say that professional development helps them to improve their practice and that they value being able to work with other teachers and teaching assistants in the federation and within the Diocese of Norwich Academy Trust (DNEAT). You and the head of school have addressed the areas for improvement identified at the time of the last inspection successfully.

Governance by the local governing body and DNEAT is strong. Local governors and the trust know the school exceptionally well. Local governors visit the school regularly to check on the quality of education provided. The area group executive principal (AGEP) makes regular visits and supports you in monitoring teaching and learning. Local governors and DNEAT provide a high level of challenge to you and the head of school as well as support.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Your policies and procedures to ensure that pupils are safe are fit for purpose. You benefit from support from DNEAT both in updating your policies and in checking that your systems are robust. Pupils feel exceptionally safe in school because of the extremely caring and supportive environment you and the staff create and maintain. You track any concerns rigorously and the head of school is relentless in pursuing external agencies to make sure that families receive the right level of support in a timely way.

### **Inspection findings**

- My first line of enquiry was to check how you are helping the most able pupils to achieve high standards at the end of key stage 1 in mathematics and writing. In the last year, you have completely reviewed and improved your approach to teaching writing. This has had a strong impact on raising the attainment of those

children who started school in Reception Year. However, a few pupils started school in Year 2 last year and did not have sufficient time to catch up and achieve as well as they could. This was also the case for their attainment in mathematics.

- My second line of enquiry focused on the impact of your actions to improve the progress of middle prior attainers in mathematics in key stage 2. Last year, you introduced a new and detailed system for checking gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding in mathematics. This enabled teachers to successfully design sharply focused interventions to fill these gaps. The school's own information about pupils' learning indicates that progress was strong for most pupils because of this new system of assessment and teaching. However, a few pupils joined the Year 6 class late in the year and did not have sufficient time to catch up and so did not make as much progress as other pupils in the class.
- During the inspection, I carried out joint observations of learning in mathematics in every class with the AGEP from DNEAT. We agreed that in your mixed-age classes, the activities at the start of mathematics lessons to sharpen and develop pupils' mental and oral skills do not always keep all pupils fully engaged in learning.
- My third line of enquiry was to find out how you have achieved strong and sustained outcomes in reading since joining the federation. The head of school has devised an extremely effective approach to teaching phonics. She ensures that parents understand how their children are taught and take an active part in supporting their children's reading at home. Reading books have been carefully organised to match the stage of phonics children have reached, providing lots of practice of each new sound they are learning in class. There is a clear rationale for reading record books, and reading at home is celebrated in weekly assemblies and rewarded with certificates.
- You make extensive use of local libraries and set reading challenges during every holiday period to encourage pupils to read as much as possible. There is good take-up of all these additional reading activities. The head of school keeps very careful track of the books pupils are reading in key stage 1. However, in key stage 2, as older pupils start to read more fluently, their reading choices are not monitored as rigorously to ensure the book is not beyond the pupil's level of understanding, even though they can read the text.
- My final line of enquiry was to check how you identify and support pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. The head of school, who is also the leader for SEN, is exceptionally skilled at identifying the precise needs of pupils who join the school who have SEN and/or disabilities. Assessment of their learning on arrival gives an accurate diagnosis of needs. The head of school is tenacious in ensuring that the right external expert is called in to support pupils and their families. Teachers write individual learning plans with the head of school. Learning targets are sharply focused and few in number, enabling pupils to experience rapid progress from their starting points. The head of school keeps in close contact with parents to ensure smooth entry into school every day and to share how well pupils are getting on.

## **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the areas for development you identify in your self-evaluation are carried through into your school improvement planning
- the approach to teaching oral and mental starters in mixed-age mathematics classes ensures that all pupils are engaged in learning during the session
- teachers carefully check pupils' choice of reading books in key stage 2, ensuring that it matches their level of understanding as well as their ability to read the words.

I am copying this letter to the chief executive officer of the Diocese of Norwich Multi Academy Trust, 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 Winyard  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I spoke with you, the head of school, the local governing body, representatives from DNEAT, the AGEP, the staff, and pupils and parents. I observed learning and teaching of mathematics in all classes with the AGEP. Pupils in Year 1, Year 2, Year 5 and Year 6 read to me. I scrutinised a range of documents, including your self-evaluation, single change plan and bite-size improvement plan. I scrutinised pupils' writing in English in key stage 1 and in other subjects with the head of school and their work in mathematics during lessons. I scrutinised a range of safeguarding documentation and a sample of pupil files. I scrutinised 14 responses to Parent View, the online questionnaire for parents. I received and read two letters from parents during the inspection. There were no responses to the online staff and pupil questionnaires.