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Mr Ashley Scott  
Headteacher  
Cottingham CofE Primary School Academy Trust  
Berryfield Road  
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Dear Mr Scott

### **Short inspection of Cottingham CofE Primary School Academy Trust**

Following my visit to the school on 3 October 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 predecessor school was judged to be good in February 2014.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You took up your post in September 2017, following a period of turbulence in leadership. Since then, you have taken a large number of clear and important steps to identify and swiftly address those aspects of provision you judged to need attention. You have swiftly addressed any underperformance of teaching in the school and given teachers good training to improve their skills. You have supported the early years leader in developing the early years classroom environments and outdoor areas. You have also established a clear behaviour system to raise expectations and ensure consistency across the school.

As a result, the school is a calm and welcoming learning environment. Classrooms are busy places where pupils now behave well and work hard. Pupils I met with explained the 'snakes and ladders' system. They said it worked because everyone liked to be noticed and celebrated when they were kind and did their best, while any sanctions were fair and proportionate. Pupils say that they are proud to be part of the school community and that the school 'feels like a big family' where pupils wear their uniform proudly. Staff are caring and model the school's values well.

Teaching is effective and is continuing to improve. Teachers inspire pupils to learn and make them want to show what they can do. For example, in the Year 1 and 2 classroom, pupils were spellbound when they passed round a dragon's egg. This motivated them to write creative ways to trap it once it hatched. As a result of engaging and well-delivered teaching, pupils' outcomes are rising across the school. For example, the proportion of pupils in Year 1 who attained the expected standard

in the phonics screening check in 2018 has improved to become slightly higher than that found nationally. Attainment in mathematics also rose considerably last year in both key stages, improving from below to above the national average in each case.

Progress is also improving for disadvantaged pupils. Pupils' work I looked at shows that they are developing greater fluency in their mathematics and are becoming more confident writers. For instance, pupils in key stage 1 had learned about adjectives and had used words such as 'fierce' and 'creepy' in their writing. A pupil in key stage 2, for example, had developed a good knowledge of place value. This allowed her to calculate negative numbers accurately. The pupil premium is being used well to help eligible pupils catch up. It is also used to improve their attendance where it is not high enough.

The curriculum is delivered through themes such as 'a seaside town'. Pupils say that lessons are both challenging and exciting, making them want to pay attention. Teachers assess pupils' work well and are clear about what they want pupils to know. For instance, when learning about 'The Wonders of Ancient Egypt', younger pupils are expected to be able to identify the physical features of Egypt. Older pupils are expected to confidently use six-figure coordinates and interpret scales using maps of the Middle East. Lessons build sequentially and pupils can explain how they can apply what they are taught to new things. For example, they had been taught that division was the inverse of multiplication. They had then used this knowledge to solve division problems with greater speed and accuracy because they had already been taught their multiplication tables well.

Working with the multi-academy trust, the local governing body and with staff, you have correctly identified where you believe further improvements are required. For example, the monitoring that leaders have done, together with pupils' work I saw, indicates that teachers are using the calculation policy that you have recently introduced. However, the subject leader for mathematics needs to check that it has the impact she intends over the longer term. You are also aware that pupils' ability to solve problems mathematically, and to explain clearly their thinking in writing, is not yet assured. For this reason, you have planned for leaders to train staff later this term so that they know how to teach pupils these skills effectively and confidently. In addition, you have also identified that pupils' spelling needs improvement, and the reasons why not enough of the most able pupils attain highly in their writing. You plan to ensure that these pupils are taught to improve their vocabulary and to demonstrate consistently accurate punctuation skills.

Parents and carers are kept well informed about the school via regular newsletters, its website and its 'Twitter feed'. This shows up-to-date news, as well as examples of pupils' writing and artwork, and results of charity work by families. Parents who responded to Parent View reported their satisfaction with all aspects of the school and the impact of your leadership, which they describe as energetic and positive. One commented: 'Teachers always make time to discuss pupils. Communication is good. I am a very happy parent!'

## **Safeguarding is effective.**

You and your staff rightly place the highest priority on keeping pupils safe in school. Staff are well trained in safeguarding and know that they must refer immediately to leaders any concerns that a pupil could be at risk of harm. Staff are knowledgeable, so they can spot potential warning signs of abuse. You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. The records you keep are systematic, clear and logical. They show that you work with parents and, where necessary, external agencies, taking brisk action to help prevent harm to pupils.

Pupils I met with told me they felt extremely safe in school. They described any bullying as 'extremely rare' and told me that, if anyone was unkind, staff will deal with it fairly and effectively. You and your staff teach pupils about a wide range of risks they may encounter in life, including how to keep themselves safe online.

## **Inspection findings**

- From broadly typical starting points, children get off to a good start in the early years. The proportions who attain a good level of development are at least broadly in line with the current national averages.
- In key stage 1, attainment is rising. The proportion of pupils who attain at least the expected standard is now above the national average in all subjects. However, a lower proportion of pupils have attained a greater depth of understanding in mathematics than that found nationally.
- Progress of pupils in key stage 2 is average and is increasing, particularly in mathematics. Greater progress has resulted in proportions attaining the expected standards in different subjects to be at least in line with, or above, the national averages. The proportion attaining the higher standard in writing remains below the national average.
- School data, confirmed in pupils' books, shows that pupils overall, including disadvantaged pupils, are making good progress from their starting points.
- Not all pupils apply their spelling skills sufficiently well when they write, for example, stories or descriptive or persuasive accounts. Also, the most able pupils do not consistently use accurate punctuation, such as hyphens for parentheses, or use sufficiently ambitious vocabulary when they write. These aspects hamper higher proportions of the most able pupils attaining a greater depth of understanding or the higher standard in writing.
- Pupils' most recent work indicates that the school's new calculation policy is being implemented well. However, leaders have not checked that it will be sufficiently effective over the longer term. Although there are increasing recent examples of pupils being given opportunities to reason mathematically and to problem solve, this is not sufficient to give pupils high levels of fluency in these skills.
- The curriculum that pupils are taught is well balanced, broad and interesting for pupils. Teachers check what pupils know and adjust their teaching if pupils do not understand something. There are also many much-enjoyed opportunities for pupils to participate in physical education (PE) and sporting activities, including

inter-school competitions in, for example, athletics.

- The local governing body is providing good levels of challenge and support to you and senior leaders. They visit the school regularly to see the school in action. They meet with you to check, for example, pupils' outcomes and the impact of recent changes, such as the school's new behaviour system.
- The multi-academy trust is providing you and your staff with good and effective levels of ongoing support. They are responsive to the school's needs and are helping you to ensure that the quality of teaching is continuing to improve. You and the governing body speak warmly of their clear communication and partnership which exist between you. This is helping all stakeholders to understand each other and ensure that all issues are discussed openly and in a timely manner.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- all pupils apply their spelling knowledge when they write
- the most able pupils consistently use accurate punctuation and ambitious vocabulary in their writing
- subject leaders check that the new calculation policy is being implemented properly over the longer term
- teachers consistently give all pupils sufficient opportunities to reason and solve problems mathematically.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the Peterborough Diocese Education Trust, the director of education for the Diocese of Peterborough, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Northamptonshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Roary Pownall  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with you and shared my lines of enquiry. I also met with the chair of the governing body, a representative from the Peterborough Diocese Education Trust, and the subject leader for English. I held a telephone conversation with the subject leader for mathematics. I considered the responses of parents to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, read all free-text comments and considered the views of those who had responded to the school's own recent questionnaire. I considered the responses from staff to Ofsted's questionnaire. We visited classrooms in

all key stages and I looked at samples of work in different subjects for pupils in many different year groups. I observed children's behaviour in lessons and as they moved about the school. I viewed a range of documents, including leaders' evaluation of the school's current performance and their plans for its further improvement. I considered a number of policy documents, including those for safeguarding. I examined the school's website to check that it meets requirements on the publication of specified information.