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Mrs Sarah Helm
Executive Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Helm

Short inspection of Redbrook Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 16 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 school was judged to be good in April 2014.

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.**

Since your arrival in September 2017 to the Wye Forest Federation, you have worked relentlessly to tackle weaknesses in Redbrook. You have been effective in taking the right actions in holding teachers to account. The processes you have introduced for checking the quality of teaching and pupils' learning are beginning to pay off. However, too many weaknesses remain. A legacy of poor pupil achievement is not yet satisfactorily resolved. You and other leaders, including governors, recognise this and are working closely with the local authority to secure the necessary improvements.

The quality of education is variable. New appointments and changes to the teaching staff are bringing renewed impetus, particularly in key stage 2. However, consistency of quality at key stage 1 and in the early years has not yet been secured. As a result, pupils do not receive the best start possible, particularly in Reception. In other ways, pupils mix well in this small school. They cooperate and show willingness to contribute in lessons. Pupils behave well and are keen to learn.

You are continuing to address issues raised at the last inspection, as well as others that have emerged since that time. You have now established systems to track every pupil. You hold discussions with teachers about pupils' progress, including during staff appraisal activities. This helps place pupils' achievement at the centre of

the school's work. Your self-evaluation is accurate. This is enabling you to recognise weaknesses and start addressing them earnestly. Furthermore, the new chair of the governing body has come on board and is proving to be a catalyst for improvement. Parents and carers are widely supportive of the school.

However, there is much to do in getting the school to where you know it should be. While other leaders and governors are involved in monitoring, their actions at Redbrook have had limited impact. Other leaders and governors across the federation do not probe sufficiently or follow up questions quickly enough. In addition, the quality of provision in the early years is poor. It lacks the ingredients needed to help the children get off to a flying start. Finally, poor attendance of particular pupils interferes too much with their achievement and preparedness for the next stage in their learning.

Safeguarding is effective.

Following your appointment, you rightly made safeguarding a top priority. You have worked effectively and followed the right advice to ensure that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You ensure that there is a strong culture of safeguarding. Staff are well trained in current legislation and in the school's own safeguarding procedures. Consequently, staff know what to do to escalate or refer any concerns promptly. As the designated safeguarding lead, you are tenacious in working with external agencies and are uncompromising on the pupils' behalf.

Pupils say they feel safe and trust staff. Pupils are knowledgeable about how to stay safe in different situations, for example in protecting their identity online or in the event of a fire. Pupils feel that bullying is not an issue at Redbrook. They have confidence that teachers will resolve any bullying incidents or the rare disagreements that occur. Pupils and parents celebrate the uniqueness of the school in terms of its size. Together with staff, they work to ensure a friendly, inclusive environment for all.

Inspection findings

- It is not possible to draw relevant conclusions from published data about pupils' achievement, due to the very small cohort sizes. Therefore, we agreed to look closely at pupils' progress and to evaluate pupils' preparedness for the next stage in their education.
- Due to weaknesses in the quality of teaching, pupils' achievement is too variable. Gaps in pupils' knowledge still hold too many back from reaching the standards reasonably expected of them in reading, writing and mathematics, including the most able.
- Weaknesses in pupils' basic knowledge, understanding and application of spelling, punctuation and grammar in writing, and inference and comprehension in reading, still slow the progress of pupils too much in English. Furthermore, pupils lack the confidence in number and fluency which is required to solve a range of mathematical problems.

- However, work in pupils' books confirms that very recent changes, particularly in key stage 2, are leading to positive signs of recovery. Pupils are enjoying their learning and starting to catch up well.
- Teaching in key stage 1 is still fragile, with unresolved issues. In particular, the early years provision is not good enough. Teachers do not plan activities or use the environment well to match learning closely enough to the children's needs.
- The early years is poorly represented in the school as a unique and distinct entity. Children are not supported well enough academically to make consistently strong progress. As a result, they are not fully prepared for the demands of key stage 1.
- During the inspection, we also considered the effectiveness of the school's curriculum. Teachers have evaluated the curriculum to identify gaps in foundation subjects. As a result, they have revised the two-year rolling programme to ensure that content, such as 'evolution and inheritance' and 'seasons', is integrated into the curriculum design.
- Furthermore, leaders are starting to consider how to nurture the skills required for pupils to be effective learners in different curricular subjects. For example, in history, these include 'organisation and enquiry skills' and how to interpret information. However, this plan is yet to be implemented fully.
- There are some notable strengths in the ways that teachers plan effective cross-curricular links. For example, in key stage 2, pupils are excited to learn about 'life in the trenches' for soldiers in the First World War. Pupils have been keen to make their own poppies from textiles for Remembrance Day and have read high-quality texts to support their reading and understanding of the topic. They have written powerful accounts showing empathy with the men who experienced trench life.
- You are taking the right actions to improve pupils' attendance. In the first few weeks of this academic year, this is starting to show some improvement. However, some pupils' absence remains too high, including for a few vulnerable pupils.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they raise standards in reading, writing and mathematics by:
 - ensuring that all leaders, including middle leaders and governors, are effective in tackling remaining weaknesses in the quality of teaching and learning
 - improving the quality of teaching, particularly in key stage 1 and the early years
 - continuing to improve pupils' attendance so that they can get the most from their education.

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

Yours sincerely

Stewart Gale
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

We worked extensively through a range of inspection activities to evaluate the key lines of enquiry. These included observing and working with children in different year groups. I checked the accuracy of teachers' assessments and records by comparing these to what pupils know, understand and can do. I also talked with pupils during lessons and breaktime. Additionally, I scrutinised safeguarding records and we discussed a wide range of related matters, including staff recruitment, training and vetting arrangements. I spoke with pupils and staff about their understanding of safeguarding procedures. I also reviewed evidence of various referrals and communications with external agencies for safeguarding pupils.

I met with school leaders and teachers. I also met with representatives of the governing body and reviewed school documents, including the school's self-evaluation summary and a sample of records of governors' visits. I analysed the school improvement plan and records of local authority reviews. I took full account of the four responses on Parent View, as well as reviewing the free texts received through the inspection. To supplement this, I met directly with a few parents at the start of the inspection. Furthermore, I had a discussion with the school's local authority link adviser.