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Mrs Lisa Crossland
Headteacher
Cuckney Church of England Primary School
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Dear Mrs Crossland

Short inspection of Cuckney 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 November 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Cuckney Church of England Primary School is a small school in a rural village with a warm and friendly atmosphere. The main school building is distinctive, a converted 19th-century water-powered cotton mill. Many of the pupils who attend the school do not live in the village, but their parents and carers bring them to this school because they value the education that is provided. Parents of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities who spoke with me are very happy with the tailored support that their children receive.

You have an accurate view of the strengths of the school and what needs to be done to improve teaching and learning. Governors, many of whom are recent appointments and are led by a new chair, have a good knowledge of the school and your plans for improvement. They hold leaders to account well.

Teachers enjoy working at this school and appreciate its family atmosphere. They have a wide range of roles and responsibilities and value opportunities to share good practice with six other schools in an informal network.

The pupils who spoke with me enjoy coming to this school and have very positive attitudes to learning. Teaching and pupils' learning in mathematics have been a focus for improvement for several years and have now become strengths. Pupils in

key stage 2 made better progress in mathematics than the national average in 2017, and provisional information suggests that they also have in 2018. Pupils are well prepared for secondary school.

When the school was last inspected, leaders were asked to improve progress in writing in key stage 1, particularly for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. Progress in writing has improved, particularly for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. Leaders provide effective guidance and support for teachers and teaching assistants working with pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. These pupils are given support that matches their needs. For instance, specially adapted resources enable pupils who have physical disabilities to develop their motor skills and practise writing for longer. Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities practise mark making, closely supported by a teacher, and are building their understanding of the correspondence between letter shapes and their sounds. However, too many middle-attaining pupils do not improve their punctuation and grammar well enough or develop their handwriting in key stage 1.

Leaders were also asked to provide more opportunities for pupils to find out about cultures and faiths other than their own, and describe their features using appropriate vocabulary. Leaders have provided a wide variety of opportunities in the curriculum for pupils to learn about cultures and faiths from across the world. For example, pupils have written about the Jewish Festival of Lights, Hanukkah, and learned about the meaning behind lighting the candles. Pupils who learned about inspirational leaders from other cultures wrote about the questions that they would like to ask them. Pupils' work on a range of religions and cultures is proudly displayed in classrooms and around the school.

Safeguarding is effective.

The school's safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. The school's designated leads for safeguarding ensure that staff are knowledgeable about safeguarding issues, including in the 'Prevent' duty. Staff know whom they should go to with concerns and are confident that these are thoroughly looked into. Safeguarding leaders keep accurate records of how concerns are dealt with. They review these records to identify any wider problems.

Leaders and teachers take effective action to resolve conflicts between pupils. Pupils who spoke with me during the day said that there are few problems and staff deal with them well. Pupils feel safe in school, are well supervised during breaktimes, and are confident in the support that adults provide for them during the school day. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe inside and outside school. For example, they are taught about cyber bullying and staying safe online. Leaders are highly vigilant about pupils' safety. For example, they have put in place and have practised a lock-down procedure with staff and pupils to increase their safety should there be a serious incident in or around the school.

Parents who spoke with me at the beginning of the day are confident that their children are safe at the school. Parents ensure that their children attend school

regularly, and the overall rates of absence and persistent absence of pupils are consistently lower than the national average.

Inspection findings

- Lower attaining pupils in key stage 2 have made less progress than their peers in recent years. Leaders have taken steps to address this issue and there are signs that these pupils' progress is now improving. They are now making effective use of phonics skills to read unfamiliar words. Teachers and teaching assistants consistently challenge and support lower ability pupils to work out the meaning of unfamiliar words from the context in the text. These pupils know how to then check for the meaning of these words using a dictionary.
- There is a strong culture of reading across the school. Like their peers, the lower attaining pupils enjoy reading and are increasingly confident in attempting more complex texts. All the pupils I met with read at home and the majority had their own favourite authors.
- In 2017, the proportion of pupils in key stage 1 who met the expected standards in writing and mathematics was well below that seen nationally. Teachers now assess pupils' understanding in mathematics frequently during lessons. They intervene rapidly to ensure that pupils understand new concepts when they are being taught. As a result, the proportion of pupils who have achieved the expected standard in mathematics has now risen and is in line with that seen nationally.
- Pupils' progress in writing in key stage 1 is less secure, however. Teachers do not consistently ensure that pupils use spaces between words, or full stops and capital letters correctly in their writing. Teaching at this key stage does not promote the development of pupils' handwriting skills well enough. Too few pupils achieved the expected standard in writing.
- The proportion of children in early years who gained a good level of development has fallen in recent years to below the national average. You identified the issues that have had a negative impact on children's progress and have now taken steps to address them. The new leader in early years has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision. There are early signs that the changes this leader has made are beginning to have an impact. For example, teachers in early years are now using their knowledge of what children know and can do to identify the gaps in children's learning and plan their next steps to ensure that these gaps are filled.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers in key stage 1 consistently encourage pupils to correctly use full stops, capital letters and spacing between words
- the teaching of writing in key stage 1 promotes pupils' handwriting skills consistently well, so that a higher proportion of pupils achieve the expected

standard.

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

Yours sincerely

Clive Worrall
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, we discussed your own evaluation of the school and I shared my key lines of enquiry with you. We visited each class, spending a short time in each. I met with other members of staff, three governors, including the vice-chair of the governing body, and with pupils and a number of parents. I held discussions with different members of staff about safeguarding, behaviour, the early years foundation stage and key stage 1. I spoke with the school improvement partner. I looked at the pupils' work available during lessons and the work of lower ability pupils with the literacy leader. I examined the school's website to check that it meets the requirements on the publication of specified information. I analysed the 34 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for parents. There were no staff responses or pupil responses to their respective Ofsted questionnaires.