

18 December 2018

Mr Paul Higginbottom
Executive Headteacher
Sutton-Cum-Lound C of E School
Portland Place
Sutton-Cum-Lound
Retford
Nottinghamshire
DN22 8PP

Dear Mr Higginbottom

Short inspection of Sutton-Cum-Lound C of E School

Following my visit to the school on 4 December 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 February 2015.

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.**

There has been a high level of staff changes in the past 12 months. A number of teachers are on leave for an extended period, including the substantive headteacher. New staff have been supported well to maintain school routines and quickly establish a team ethos. Leaders have ensured parents have received timely information for a smooth transition.

The local authority has effectively supported the governors to put in place appropriate leadership arrangements at this important time. You started to work informally with the school in September 2018 and was appointed as the executive headteacher at the end of October 2018. You bring a high level of expertise and have quickly gained an accurate picture of the school. You are working effectively with the local authority. Together, you have promptly put in place training and work with other schools to address identified priorities.

Governors are committed to the school and to securing the best outcomes for pupils. They understand the key areas that need to improve. They ask challenging questions and check out what is happening for themselves. Despite this, senior leaders have not analysed information from monitoring and assessment with sufficient precision. As a result, priorities for improvement have not been sufficiently

sharp to keep the school moving rapidly forward.

At the time of the previous inspection, leaders were asked to improve teaching, especially for the most able. Teachers' expectations of what pupils need to be able to do has not shifted quickly enough in response to raised national standards since 2015. Leaders have not ensured that frameworks for planning have secured the skills, knowledge and understanding that pupils need to attain as well as they could.

The school has very small cohorts, so comparison with national averages must be treated cautiously. However, progress at key stage 2 for most pupils in reading, writing and mathematics has been below national averages since 2015. In 2018, there was a further decline in progress and attainment for the pupils who have just left the school. You and the local authority have undertaken a thorough examination of what has not worked well enough, and you have an accurate understanding of what needs to improve.

At key stage 1 and in Reception, outcomes have been broadly in line with national averages over time. From pupils' starting points, they have made good progress. Recently appointed teachers have used their expertise well to sustain good progress and teaching. For example, they have made good use of the sharper assessment information you have provided for each class. They are using this to pinpoint what pupils need to learn next.

Overall, pupils' behaviour and attitudes are positive. Pupils are proud of their school and particularly value its welcoming, family feel. Around school, pupils are polite and respectful of each other. At breakfast club, pupils enjoy activities and additional time with friends. Older pupils help and support younger children well. However, during our visits to classrooms together, we saw that pupils were sometimes slow to respond to adult instructions, so transitions between activities and learning were slowed.

Leaders put the schools' Christian values at the heart of school life. The school brings together the community across the school year, including for times such as harvest and Christingle. The school also successfully uses community opportunities, for example to improve the garden and pond area.

Leaders' chosen approach to the curriculum is ensuring that pupils are enthusiastic to learn. Pupils told me that they enjoy interesting topics, and trips and experiences that bring their learning to life, for example training to be Roman soldiers at Lincoln Castle. Teachers provide stimulating learning environments, in line with school's policy. However, teachers are not all equally skilled at building on pupils' enthusiasm in order to extend and deepen their knowledge and understanding.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Parents and carers appreciate the approachable staff. Parents have a high level of confidence that their children are happy, safe and looked after well. Those pupils

spoken with said that they feel safe because they trust adults to listen and help them with any problems that arise.

Leaders make sure that all staff receive up-to-date training. Staff are clear about how to report a concern about a child's welfare, should one arise. You ensure that records are kept confidentially and securely. Governors receive appropriate training and regularly check school procedures. The local authority provides effective support and guidance.

Pupils are well informed through assemblies and lessons. They know how to keep themselves and others safe, including water and road safety. The curriculum includes a regular focus on online safety.

Inspection findings

- Visits to classrooms showed that you have a well-developed understanding of effective teaching and learning and are using this well to identify next steps. Teachers are consistent in following the school's policy to provide themed settings to link to topics, for example model planets and equipment for astronauts added to the atmosphere in key stage 2. There is also a consistent effort to link writing and mathematics to wider subjects and topics, in line with school policy.
- In the Reception Year, we saw the teacher using time well to reinforce and extend learning. For example, the teacher used lining-up for play as an opportunity to draw out and check children's learning. The teacher was checking children's progress in their model making task, and they were keen to use new mathematical language to tell each other about the materials they used, for example one pupil said: 'I used rectangular paper for my stickman.'
- At key stage 1, we saw that there were consistent expectations that pupils use skills accurately within creative tasks. For example, Year 1 pupils were using capital letters and full stops consistently when writing a sequence of sentences about 'shifting glittery snow' while imagining being inside a snow globe.
- At key stage 2, teachers were consistently including problem-solving tasks in mathematics lessons. However, opportunities to show pupils how to tackle problems were missed. In upper key stage 2, the problems pupils were asked to solve did not require or show pupils how to reason and tackle sufficiently complex problems. Therefore, pupils were not systematically developing skills to securely attain age-related or better standards. The findings from the scrutiny of pupils' books were consistent with what was observed in classes.
- Discussions with teachers showed that leaders have provided a range of published materials to support teachers' planning for pupils' learning across the school. However, the way these are expected be used is not mapped out sufficiently stringently by leaders. There is not a consistent whole-school map of progression for what pupils need to know, understand and be able to do.
- Leaders introduced a revised tracking system during the last academic year, as part of the schools' focus on checking on and improving pupils' progress and attainment. You have already undertaken more accurate analysis against this.

You are working with each class teacher to use a 'raising attainment plan' to more precisely adapt planning to accelerate progress. However, the scrutiny of the school's current information showed that teachers' ability to assess accurately is not embedded across the school, particularly in upper key stage 2.

- Historically, attendance rates at the school have been well below national averages. There have been improvements to bring them closer to national averages. However, school absence remains persistently below national averages. The school has appropriate procedures in place for following-up absences. However, opportunities to ensure that parents and pupils are mindful of the importance of attendance are missed, for example it has not been promoted in newsletters this academic year.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- information from monitoring and assessment is analysed more precisely in order to identify actions to improve teaching further, particularly upper key stage 2
- leaders provide teachers with a cohesive and clear framework to deepen their subject knowledge and enable them to plan sequences of learning that provide appropriate challenge in order to raise pupils' attainment
- teachers' assessments are accurate and they use the information resulting from revised assessment procedures to inform more precise adjustments to their plans to accelerate pupils' progress
- teachers consistently show pupils how to tackle more complex problems and how to improve their work
- adults have consistently high expectations of pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning
- parents and pupils understand the importance of high attendance in order to secure school attendance closer to national averages.

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

Mandy Wilding
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and shared my lines of enquiry. I also met with the acting head of school. In addition, I met with current class teachers. I also met the chair of governors and three other governors. I spoke to a representative of the local authority. You and I jointly visited classes to observe pupils learning, speak with them and look at their books. I looked at samples of pupils' work with you. I observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and across the school day. I met with a group of pupils and talked with other pupils around the school.

I viewed a range of documents, including leaders' evaluation of the school's current performance and its plans for further improvement. I considered a number of policy documents, including those for safeguarding. I examined the school's website and checked on the publication of specified information. I spoke to nine parents at the start of the school day and considered the responses of 18 parents to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and 16 free-text comments. I considered the responses to Ofsted's questionnaires for three staff and for five pupils.