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15 February 2019

Mrs Andrea Tomlinson
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Tomlinson

Short inspection of Peak Forest Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 29 January 2019, 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 June 2015.

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 position at the beginning of January and have quickly begun to build on the strengths of the school. Staff morale is high as staff are keen to develop and further improve the quality of education for the pupils. Leaders, governors and staff have worked together to develop a curriculum which encourages pupils to explore the rich environment in which the school is set.

Leaders are united in also seeking to provide pupils with the opportunity to understand how they are part of a wider world. They encourage pupils to help people locally, such as by distributing harvest gifts. After listening to a charity worker, pupils thought carefully about which gifts might be helpful to refugees and collected them so that they could make a difference to others in need. Pupils considered their use of plastic and the impact that this is having on the environment. There is a strong, caring ethos which encourages pupils to care for each other as well as for the world around them.

Pupils thoroughly enjoy their 'woodland learning'. They become independent and know how to prepare themselves to be outside in different weather conditions. They understand where boundaries are in the forest and can explain how these keep them safe. Pupils identify which places in the local area are special to them and

describe them with a sense of wonder and appreciation. Older pupils are inspired to identify the minibeasts that they have found.

Parents that I spoke with appreciated the collaborative ethos of the school. They felt as though they were working together with the staff as a team and that staff were quick to spot if their children needed any additional help. Well-planned support ensures that pupils' emotional and behavioural needs are met effectively. Staff make regular checks on their learning so that additional teaching can be built in if necessary. This prepares pupils well for their work in class. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) make strong progress.

Leaders have been able to provide pupils with better access to a wider range of competitive sporting activities and cultural experiences by working together with other small schools. Pupils value these opportunities to socialise with a wider group of peers and say that it helps them to prepare for transition to secondary school.

The areas for improvement identified at the last inspection focused on the development of aspects of the leadership and management of the school. Since the last inspection, the school has federated with another local primary school. You have now established a senior leadership team across this federation of schools. Staff expertise is beginning to be used effectively across the federation. This is helping staff to improve their subject knowledge and provide better professional development.

Governors have a clear understanding of what the school does well and what could be improved further. They meet with leaders regularly and understand how much progress pupils are making. Governors have provided effective support and a clear direction during a period of change in the leadership of the school. For example, they have worked with interim leaders during this time to bring about improvements in the teaching of mathematics.

At the time of the last inspection, leaders were asked to enable pupils to extend their vocabulary and provide opportunities for them to rehearse what they want to write. During the inspection, younger pupils used pictorial clues to recall facts about lions that they had learned the previous day. Pupils acted out a sequence about wild cats to help them to remember the order that they were going to write in. Older pupils made succinct, accurate notes about the changing seasons in the Arctic. They used these effectively to write well-organised and informative paragraphs.

Pupils have many imaginative opportunities to write at length in a range of subjects. Younger pupils used computer programs to write diaries as though they were Samuel Pepys. Older pupils wrote well-judged accounts of life as an ancient Egyptian slave. However, pupils do not present their work as well as they could do across the curriculum. Staff do not consistently model the style of handwriting that the school teaches or expect all pupils to write fluently and neatly.

Safeguarding is effective.

Staff have a good understanding of what they should do to keep pupils safe. There has been an effective handover between leaders of safeguarding. Training is comprehensive and up to date. Staff communicate effectively with each other to ensure that pupils' health and well-being are monitored effectively. They use the school's system of recording concerns when appropriate. Leaders have developed effective partnerships with parents and external agencies. Governors and staff have a clear understanding of their responsibility to safeguard pupils from the threat of extremism.

All parents who responded to the online survey felt that their children were safe at school. Children feel safe and can explain how they are taught to keep themselves safe. They understand how to keep themselves safe online. Staff have skilfully adapted the curriculum to provide opportunities to discuss this. Through a topic on creating websites, pupils learned about what it was appropriate to post online. They know not to disclose personal information and not to meet a friend who they only know online.

Inspection findings

- The teaching of reading is effective. Staff regularly check the phonic sounds that younger pupils know. Well-planned teaching builds on these assessments and current pupils make strong gains. Staff make sure that the most able pupils have suitably challenging texts to read from an early age.
- Older pupils read fluently and with secure comprehension. They use their knowledge of the world around them to explain what words such as 'murky' mean and to describe the effect of a stone being thrown into a pond. The most able pupils can describe the techniques that authors use to 'hook' readers so that they want to read more. They have developed reading stamina and enjoy reading series of books by the same author. They are proud of their class library and appreciate the responsibility of choosing new books for others to enjoy.
- Scrutiny of pupils' workbooks shows that pupils' fluency in mathematics is secure. Pupils' work is differentiated well so that pupils are building on the knowledge that they already have. Younger pupils can solve problems with money to work out change. Older pupils use short and long division to work out the number of egg boxes that will be needed for a given quantity of eggs. Teachers challenge pupils to explain their thinking when they speak with them. However, there are few examples of pupils being able to explain their answers independently. Pupils do not yet have sufficient opportunities to use reasoning as part of the development of their mathematical understanding.
- Pupils make strong progress in a range of curriculum areas. For example, younger pupils use computer programs to compose simple musical sequences. Older pupils can use their programming skills to create sequences in coding and build simple computer games. Pupils use the skills that they have gained in other subjects in science. They draw accurate graphs about the length of shadows during the day and use these to answer questions. They record the outcomes of

investigations well and can describe in detail how the digestive system works.

- The curriculum is well planned to promote pupils' health and well-being. Pupils learn about the importance of a balanced diet and can explain why exercise is important. The school ensures that there are opportunities for pupils to be active every day. This includes exercise before collective worship as well as active breaktimes on the new playground equipment. The primary physical education and sport premium is used well. Leaders have improved the range of activities available to pupils. Pupils have access to individually based pursuits such as climbing and cycling as well as different sports that help them to work cooperatively, such as orienteering. Uptake of these activities is high, and leaders are beginning to monitor the impact that these activities are having on pupils' fitness.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils have the opportunities to deepen their mathematical thinking through reasoning so that they can explain their answers precisely, using the correct terminology
- pupils' work is presented in a consistently fluent style and to the same standard in all subjects.

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

Yours sincerely

Hazel Henson

Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and other leaders in the school. I spoke with four members of the governing body, including the chair, and a representative from the local authority. I met with staff and considered views expressed in the staff survey. I met formally with a group of pupils and spoke with others informally during the inspection. I also considered their responses to the online survey. I observed learning, jointly with you, in both classes. I scrutinised with you a selection of pupils' workbooks and other collections of pupils' work. I examined a range of the school's documentation, including its self-evaluation document, development plan and documents related to safeguarding. I observed behaviour around the school during the day. I considered the views of parents by speaking with them before school. I analysed the 12 responses to Parent View.