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Mrs Rebecca Newman
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Dear Mrs Newman

Short inspection of Great Witchingham Church of England Primary Academy

Following my visit to the school on 15 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 predecessor school was judged to be good in November 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. Great Witchingham Church of England Primary Academy is a friendly school. Leaders and staff know the pupils very well. Pupils told me that, 'The school feels like one big family.' Parents also spoke about, 'the school's welcoming and friendly feel' in their responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. They unanimously agree that they would recommend the school to others. Effective leadership has ensured that the school is well placed to continue its positive journey of school improvement. One parent, who summed up the views of many, said, 'The school has improved beyond all recognition.'

There have been several changes since the inspection of the predecessor school. The school became an academy in 2016 as part of the Diocese of Norwich Education Academies Trust (DNEAT). In November 2017 the school formed the Trinity Federation with two local primary schools, Hockering Church of England Primary Academy and St Peter's Church of England Primary Academy. The federation shares a local governing body. As the executive headteacher of the three schools, you divide your time between them.

Leaders have accurately identified the school's strengths and its weaker areas. They act swiftly to make any changes required. These actions are having a positive impact on improving the school. For example, the school's improvement plan correctly identifies the need to increase the proportion of pupils working at the

higher standards in writing and mathematics throughout the school. As a result of leaders' actions, the proportion of pupils working at the higher standards in writing and in mathematics is increasing and moving closer to the national averages.

Since the inspection of the predecessor school, pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of key stages 1 and 2 have been typically above the national averages. The 2018 published results for both key stages were unusually low. In looking at this information, we discussed how the small number of pupils in each year group can have a significant impact on the results, both positively and negatively, and results must therefore be treated with caution. The results in 2018 were skewed by the small numbers of pupils involved and did not reflect the strong progress made by most pupils.

Children get off to a good start in the early years provision. Staff ensure that children have access to a stimulating learning environment. Most children start school with knowledge and skills that are broadly typical for their age in most areas of learning. At the end of Reception, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development is above the national average. Consequently, most children make strong progress from their different starting points. However, in 2018 the proportion of children exceeding the early learning goals in reading and writing was below the national average. Staff have improved their teaching approaches and as a result the most able children are more regularly challenged in the activities they undertake. This is having a positive impact on the progress they make, particularly in reading and writing, but there is more work to do to ensure that the most able children consistently achieve as well as they can.

Pupils across the school are sociable and get on with each other. They are well behaved and enjoy learning. The school's chosen curriculum approach links subjects together and under specific themes. One theme linked to the Romans included a visit from 'Boudicca' and an afternoon looking at Roman artefacts. On the day of the inspection, Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 were taking part in a school visit to Cromer Museum, linked to a dinosaur topic. When they returned, pupils told me that the trip was 'really good' and that they had been 'palaeontologists finding fossils by sifting through sand'. Pupils are involved in other interesting activities such as growing and harvesting their own vegetables from the school's raised beds and presenting these at the local harvest festival.

Pupils learn about other faiths and cultures. They show respect for others and are tolerant of individual differences. They show a sound understanding of fundamental British values. For example, Year 6 pupils told me that the school 'would welcome and support people from many different backgrounds because we can learn from them'.

The area group executive principal from DNEAT offers appropriate challenge and support to leaders and ensures that leaders have access to a range of improvement resources. Subject leaders speak highly of the quality of this support and the positive impact this is having on improving pupils' outcomes. Following training, subject leaders are ensuring that teachers' assessments across a range of subjects

are consistent and accurate throughout the school.

Governors use assessment information to make accurate summaries of the school's performance and to ensure that follow-up actions are appropriate. They use these plans and the impact of actions taken to hold leaders to account. Governors are well supported by the trust through regular training. For example, recent training on school finances has helped governors to make strategic decisions regarding the organisation of classes.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders ensure that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that children are kept safe. The school's approach that 'safeguarding is everybody's responsibility' is reflected in the strong culture of safeguarding that I observed during the inspection. All staff have completed the necessary training relating to keeping pupils safe, including their responsibilities under the 'Prevent' duty which keeps pupils safe from the risk of extremism or radicalisation.

Records of concern are detailed and the school works effectively with outside agencies, such as social services. Appropriate and swift referrals ensure that children and families receive the support they need in a timely manner. This results in positive outcomes for pupils, both academically and pastorally.

Pupils learn about e-safety and have a good understanding of how to stay safe when using computers. They told me about the 'think you know app' and 'blocking approaches' to keep them safe online. All staff who responded to Ofsted's online survey and the parents who responded to Ofsted's questionnaire, Parent View, strongly agree that children are happy and safe at this school.

Inspection findings

- In order to evaluate whether the school remains good I identified a number of lines of enquiry that we agreed in our initial meeting. My first line of enquiry looked at pupils' outcomes in writing.
- I considered leaders' actions, following an uncharacteristic dip in outcomes in writing in national test results in 2018. The school's improvement plan rightly prioritises increasing the proportion of pupils attaining the higher standards in writing by the time they leave the school. DNEAT specialist training for the English leader has resulted in more effective monitoring and leadership of the subject. Strong leadership has raised teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve and improved the accuracy of teachers' assessment of pupils' progress. This is beginning to have a positive impact on current pupils' writing. For example, pupils in Years 5 and 6 were enthusiastically engaged in a narrative writing lesson using figurative language. The teacher's strong subject knowledge and effective modelling of subject-specific words enabled pupils to learn effectively. One pupil wrote, 'angrily the water crashes down onto the surface of the earth' and other pupils correctly identified the use of personification.
- Work in pupils' books throughout the school shows that most pupils are now

making better progress in a range of writing styles. However, recent improvements in the teaching of writing need to be firmly in place in all year groups so that the most able pupils consistently achieve as well as they should.

- My second line of enquiry concerned pupils' outcomes in mathematics. This was an area for improvement identified in the previous inspection report. I looked at how the school shares good practice in the teaching of mathematics, the school's approach to teaching calculations and whether pupils make good progress in this subject.
- Leaders have chosen to introduce team teaching across the federation of three schools. This is enabling the modelling of good practice and the sharing of expertise between teachers and schools. Leaders have introduced a new mathematics planning format. This is developing pupils' mathematics reasoning and problem-solving skills. These new strategies are making a positive difference to the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes. For example, in a Year 3 and Year 4 lesson the teacher's accurate planning enabled pupils firstly to consolidate and check their eight times-tables knowledge before applying these skills successfully in calculating eighths of amounts in their fractions work.
- The school has introduced a new calculations policy to help pupils improve their mathematical calculation skills. Training has been put in place for all teaching staff. Parent information sessions have been held so that parents understand how to support their children at home. Recently introduced 'Calculation Mondays' ensure the application of the calculation policy. This is improving pupils' recall and accuracy in mathematics.
- Most pupils are now making better progress in mathematics across the school and attainment is beginning to rise. The mathematics leader has invested in improving the learning resources across the school. I observed these resources being put to good use and it was clear that they are helpful in deepening pupils' learning. However, there is still more to do to ensure that the most able pupils are routinely challenged and attain the higher standards in mathematics.
- My third line of enquiry was to check that pupils continue to behave well and attend school regularly. I wanted to explore this aspect because of a slight dip in pupils' attendance in 2017.
- Leaders have put in place many effective systems that are consistently applied by staff to ensure that pupils' good standards of behaviour are sustained. I observed pupils' good conduct both in lessons and on the playground. The Year 6 sports leaders told me how much they enjoy leading key stage 1 sports activities during Monday lunchtimes. The school's nurturing approach to pupils' personal development was illustrated as one member of staff led a session at lunchtime in the 'quiet reflection area'. This was specifically designed to support pupils who struggle to join in with playground activities. 'Superstar Friday' celebration assemblies reward good attitudes to learning for pupils from each class in the school.
- Attendance was below the national average in 2018. Leaders devote much time and energy working with families to ensure that their children attend school regularly. The school uses all the available legal measures to make clear to

parents that there are consequences for their children's unauthorised absence. Reward systems such as the weekly attendance assemblies and half-termly attendance trophies recognise the good attendance of the majority of pupils. Revised strategies have led to a rise in pupils' attendance, which is now back in line with the national average.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they increase the proportion of most-able children who exceed the early learning goals for reading and writing by the end of the Reception Year
- teachers routinely challenge the most able pupils in writing and mathematics, so that they achieve the higher standards of which they are capable by the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the local governing body, the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the director of education for the Diocese of Norwich, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Norfolk. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Cloke
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, some teachers, the chair of the local governing body, the chief executive officer of the trust, the academy improvement director, area group executive principals, administrative staff and pupils.

Visits were made to all classrooms and a selection of books from all year groups were scrutinised. A range of documents, policies and assessment information were also examined. I considered the responses of 13 parents to the Ofsted questionnaire, Parent View, and the eight responses to Ofsted's staff survey.