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Mrs Rebecca Newman  
Executive Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Newman

### **Short inspection of Hockering Church of England Primary Academy**

Following my visit to the school on 14 February 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 your 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 predecessor school's last inspection. You and your staff have created a family atmosphere which is valued by governors, parents and pupils. This family atmosphere is typified by the parent volunteers who provide breakfast for pupils each day. The pupils I spoke with said that this is a great way to start the day as they are able to talk with their friends and catch up on work, while enjoying toast and fruit.

Leaders have accurately identified strengths and weaknesses for the school and, with the support of the trust and the federation, have created clear plans to improve these areas. Leaders accurately monitor the impact of these plans through looking at books and observing lessons. A recent action to improve the richness of language across all year groups has seen a focus on higher-quality reading texts, tips on correct use of grammar displayed in each class and teachers encouraging pupils to talk about their reading and writing. During my lesson observations and looking at work, I was able to see the positive impact this has had on standards in writing across all years.

Pupils work and play well together and they also contribute to the family atmosphere, through the sensitive way in which they care for each other. At breaktimes, older pupils lead games for younger pupils and they go out of their way to ensure that no one is left out. Pupils take pride in their learning, behave well in lessons and enjoy coming to school.

Teachers use their strong subject knowledge to provide work that challenges pupils in their class. They have created a culture in which pupils are confident to ask questions and where mistakes can be made and learned from. Teaching assistants are well directed by teachers to ensure that pupils in all year groups are supported and challenged in lessons. I saw a mathematics lesson in which there were four different activities taking place for pupils to learn about multiplication. One group were using counting blocks, and another had a word problem to solve. Each activity was well matched to the needs of the pupils and as a result of precise planning and good teaching, all groups made good progress.

Parents are very happy with the education that their children receive and they like the way that leaders involve them in the learning. They particularly enjoy the celebration assemblies and the learning cafes. One parent said: 'I feel incredibly lucky to have found a school who are so warm and nurturing but also challenge my child to make good progress and succeed. I also love that, as a small school, they get to know every child so well; it is incredibly reassuring.' Another parent said, 'My daughter absolutely loves going to school every day. The personalised education is brilliant.' These comments reflect what other parents think about the school.

Governors know the school well and are able to highlight the benefits and challenges that small numbers bring. They recognise the support received from the trust, particularly around subject development and they are confident in challenging subject leaders to improve outcomes. Governors carefully monitor the spending of the extra money that the school receives for disadvantaged pupils and, by looking at work with leaders, they are able to evaluate how this has an impact on pupils' progress.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders have created a culture where safeguarding comes first. All staff know the pupils and their families well and they are rigorous in their actions to keep pupils safe.

All adults, including those visiting the school, are carefully checked to ensure that they are safe to work with pupils. All documentation in regard to these checks is well organised and regularly monitored by governors.

Pupils were able to talk confidently about what constitutes bullying and they know how to report it if it happens. They feel very safe in school and they know how to stay safe in and out of school and when using the internet.

Staff know what to do if they have concerns and procedures in school are robust to ensure that actions and impacts are monitored. Incidents are well documented, and you were able to show me evidence of where leaders have been vigilant in following up concerns with other agencies where they feel their actions were not sufficient.

## Inspection findings

- One of the areas that I wanted to look at was the number of pupils working at greater depth in writing and mathematics, as your results have not always been in line with those of other schools nationally. I took into account the small numbers and how one or two pupils can make a big difference to your final percentages in the end of key stage 1 and 2 tests.
- When I looked at pupils' mathematics books, I could see that there has been a recent increase in the number of opportunities that pupils are given to work at greater depth and teachers and pupils are beginning to understand what the higher standard in mathematics looks like. Teachers are setting fewer arithmetic questions and giving more time to multi-step word problems and investigations. As a result, pupils are beginning to develop their confidence and are making good progress towards the higher standards. Subject leaders are very clear on what needs to be done.
- When I looked at English books with pupils, they were able to show me the writing expectations sheet at the front of their books and they were able to talk confidently about what they have to do to write at greater depth. They then showed me examples of where they had produced more complex and sophisticated writing.
- Leaders are working with other schools across the trust to develop good practice. This was evident in the work that you are doing to increase pupils' resilience when producing longer pieces of writing. I could see examples of increased stamina in pupils' writing when I looked through books.
- Another area that I wanted to inspect was your curriculum and how well leaders have tailored it to suit the needs of all pupils. From talking to parents and pupils and during my lesson observations, I could see that leaders have created a curriculum which is almost bespoke to each pupil. Staff know pupils well and they set work that challenges pupils to do their best. Work in subjects other than English and mathematics is of a high standard and pupils enjoy working in these subjects. I observed a religious education lesson in which pupils were talking about the different forms of love that exist. Pupils from Year 1 and 2 were able to express their thoughts articulately and it was clear that this lesson had been built on strong prior learning.
- Work in topic books shows that pupils make good progress over time with a good spread of subjects. When I spoke with pupils, it was clear that they enjoy their topic work, but they were not always certain how well they were doing in these subjects. For subjects other than English and mathematics, checking for pupils' knowledge, understanding and progress is in the early stages of development.
- The curriculum is also strengthened through the opportunities for enrichment, including singing at the O2 arena, camping out with outdoor cooking, a residential trip, visits to interesting places and visiting speakers. You told me about the sporting opportunities that pupils are given and how, with your small numbers, everyone is included to make a team.

## **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the assessment in subjects other than English and mathematics is developed to enable teachers to plan more effectively and allow leaders to monitor progress
- the number of pupils working at greater depth in writing and at the higher standard in mathematics increases.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the 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

Nick Templeton  
**Ofsted Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, you and I visited both classes and looked at pupils' books from all age groups. I met with six pupils from Years 2, 5 and 6 and they shared some of their work with me. I spoke with parents at the beginning of the day and received seven responses from parents to Parent View, the Ofsted online survey, and seven free-text comments. I took into account four responses to the online staff survey. I also met with three governors and three representatives from the trust. I talked informally to pupils during lessons and breaks and in addition I examined a range of documents, including the school development plan, assessment information, behaviour logs and safeguarding information.