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Mrs Amy Carnell
Headteacher
Appleton Church of England (A) Primary School
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Dear Mrs Carnell

No formal designation inspection of Appleton Church of England (A) Primary School

Following my visit with Catherine Davies, Ofsted Inspector to your school on 13 February 2019, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

This inspection was conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and in accordance with Ofsted's published procedures for inspecting schools with no formal designation. The inspection was carried out because Her Majesty's Chief Inspector was concerned about outcomes for pupils at the school.

Evidence

We met with you, senior leaders, the chair of governors and two other governors. The lead inspector held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. We observed learning in most classes and age groups. Some observations were carried out jointly with senior leaders. Children in the early years and pupils in Year 1 were not observed as they were away on a school trip. We analysed a range of the school's documentation, including the minutes of the governing body's meetings and the school improvement plan. We discussed your evaluation of the school's effectiveness. We gathered the views of pupils throughout the day and considered the 49 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View. We scrutinised the single central record of recruitment checks and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements.

Having considered the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

Leaders and governors have taken effective action to maintain the high standards of pupils' outcomes identified at the previous section 5 inspection. The overall effectiveness of the school remains outstanding.

Context

The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school. The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged is below that seen nationally. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is below that seen nationally. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. In recent years, the school has grown as the planned admission number has increased from 22 to 28. Leaders have extended the buildings, adding a new foundation stage classroom, and increased the size of some other classrooms. The school's most recent section 48 inspection took place on 27 March 2014.

Since the previous section 5 inspection, there have been many changes to staffing, including at leadership level. Most staff have joined the school since it was last inspected. You joined in September 2016, following the retirement of the previous headteacher. As an interim measure, two class teachers were appointed as senior teachers in January 2017 with key stage and core subject lead responsibilities. In September 2017, following a restructuring of leadership, the assistant headteacher joined. This member of staff holds responsibility for mathematics, key stage 2 and SEND. One of the class teachers has continued in their senior teacher role and has responsibility for key stage 1, the foundation stage and English.

Inspection findings

Since taking up the post of headteacher, you have led with purposeful intent to ensure that high standards are maintained. You are determined to see every pupil succeed and make the best possible progress during their time at Appleton. You have restructured and extended your leadership team, ensuring that all staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities. Under your forward-thinking leadership, all play their part in ensuring that the school continues to go from strength to strength. Well-judged changes have built upon the high standards observed at the previous inspection. Consequently, pupils continue to achieve extremely well.

Under your leadership, you have ensured that staff are all clear on where the school's priorities lie. Self-evaluation and school improvement planning are rigorous. You are unyielding in following up on any blips in the school's performance, instigating thoughtful and detailed actions. You monitor teaching closely and ensure that staff, including those at an early stage of their career, are supported well. The school improvement plan sets out your priorities and reflects your ambition that all groups of pupils, including the middle attainers, achieve well. Furthermore, the school's plans for the spending of additional funding ensure that disadvantaged

pupils benefit from tailored learning opportunities that meet their needs effectively.

The school's vision of 'building wisely for life' is fully exemplified in your work. You are determined that the curriculum holds meaning. For instance, opportunities to engage in subjects like engineering hold real-life value for pupils. The curriculum is exceptionally well planned and enables pupils to flourish in many different aspects of learning. Pupils can articulate how the school's curriculum contributes positively towards their futures. They relish new experiences and one pupil told inspectors, 'We love learning new things.' Pupils are superbly prepared for the next step in all aspects of their education. Most parents and carers who responded to Parent View would recommend the school.

In 2018, pupils' progress in writing and mathematics dipped at the end of key stage 2. However, attainment remained high and above that seen nationally. Due to exceptionally high starting points, a small proportion of middle-attaining pupils did not advance as rapidly as expected. Nevertheless, your analysis shows that there are some exceptional reasons behind the statistics. The school's own information shows that current pupils, including the most able, are making rapid and sustained progress, maintaining or building upon their high starting points. Current pupils, including middle-attaining pupils, achieve highly in all aspects of learning.

Last year, you moved teachers into different age groups, determined that staff should make the most of their strengths. You also changed the school's approach to the teaching of writing and mathematics. Both initiatives, when coupled together, are exerting a very positive impact on standards. Pupils, including the middle attainers, are now making even stronger progress in writing and mathematics. Teaching and learning activities are purposeful and teachers hold high expectations of pupils' productivity and behaviour. Pupils respond well, working with engagement and enthusiasm. Nevertheless, pupils' presentation does not always meet the same high standard as the content of their work.

Teachers skilfully foster an enjoyment of mathematics among pupils, expertly encouraging pupils to explain their thinking. Pupils relish opportunities to solve tricky problems, working with fluency and great dexterity across the number system. They are highly effective mathematicians and confidently use a range of written approaches to find solutions. Pupils enjoy high levels of success. In 2018, outcomes in mathematics in Year 2 and Year 6 were above those seen nationally.

Additional funding, including the pupil premium, is used well. Barriers to learning are carefully considered and appropriate interventions put in place. Disadvantaged pupils, including those who are achieving as well as their peers, benefit from the additional support they receive. Support staff are highly skilled and demonstrate secure subject knowledge. Adults question pupils insightfully and this helps pupils, including those with SEND, to rehearse and consolidate new concepts effectively. The majority of parents who responded to Parent View note that their children are well taught and make good progress.

Pupils get on well together. There is a tangible buzz to learning activities as pupils thrive on high levels of challenge. They enjoy reasoning and take delight in solving tricky problems. Pupils say that this is a very friendly and harmonious school. One pupil commented: 'This is a good school because we all get on well. Pupils are friendly and there are very few arguments.' The school's three core values of respect, kindness and responsibility flow seamlessly throughout each day.

Governors are highly effective and ambitious for the school's continued success. They gather first-hand evidence regularly, keeping themselves well informed. When making significant decisions, governors drill down to the nub of the matter, asking knowledgeable questions and providing high levels of challenge to senior leaders. They are proud of the school's successes and determined to play their part in supporting you well.

Priorities for further improvement

- Leaders and managers should further improve pupils' presentation so that it better matches the high standards that pupils achieve in the content of their written work.

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

Yours sincerely

Elizabeth Farr
Her Majesty's Inspector