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Mr George Trafford
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Trafford

Short inspection of The Morton Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 5 March 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 March 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since the last inspection, the school became an academy in 2016, as part of the Lincoln Anglican Academy Trust. It has a new nursery, which opened in 2018, and the school now has provision for children from the age of two. You, the staff team and governors have worked hard to provide a stimulating environment within a Christian ethos where pupils can become confident learners. You share a commitment to improving learning opportunities so that pupils can achieve their very best. This vision is shared by the academy trust and with its support, the quality of education that is provided continues to improve.

Pupils told me that this is a friendly school where everyone feels welcomed. They enjoy their learning. Pupils told me that, 'they learn in a fun way,' and that, 'teachers are really good at helping you learn things in different ways'. They spoke with enthusiasm about the exciting visits and learning activities that the school provides.

Pupils value the opportunities to take part in sporting activities with other schools and appreciate the residential visits that are organised for them. They try hard, cooperate well with each other and are keen to do well. Their behaviour reflects the values that the school actively seeks to promote.

Pupils are able to access a breakfast and after-school club, as well as a range of after-school activities. Pupils told me that they enjoy coming to the breakfast club.

They like the games and activities that are provided, and enjoy playing with their friends. You also ensure that pupils who find the transition to school difficult at the start of the day are supported to engage in learning through physical activities. The encouragement and support that they receive during this time help them to start the day positively.

Parents and carers value the school's caring ethos. They feel that their children are taught well and that children are 'challenged and well looked after'. Parents with children new to the school spoke to me about how well their children had settled into the school, and the progress that they were now making.

Members of the governing body know the school well and with the support of the academy trust, provide you with appropriate challenge and support. They have an accurate knowledge of the school and know what needs to be done to develop the quality of education. They demonstrate a strong commitment to improving the school further. They check the work of the school regularly by observing lessons, looking at pupils' work and by talking to pupils and parents. This gives them a clear overview of the school.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. Respect for different cultures and religions is fostered through visits to different places of worship, visitors to school and through the wider curriculum. Pupils are involved in events in the local community and in raising money for different charities. Older pupils take on positions of responsibility within the school and provide role models for younger pupils. This creates a tolerant, respectful school community.

Leaders and governors have ensured that children get off to a strong start in the early years foundation stage. The new Nursery provision provides a bright, stimulating environment for learning and play. It is well resourced and provides a range of opportunities for indoor and outdoor learning activities. Teachers plan learning experiences for pupils linked to their interests and that engage them and sustain their interest. Relationships are warm and nurturing. The use of careful questioning by adults fosters the development of children's language and thinking skills. This enables children to develop confidence and to be ready to start school.

This strong foundation is built upon further in Reception Year. Together we looked at how early reading skills were being taught. Pupils responded with enthusiasm to a lively phonics lesson which used physical activity and music. Teachers provided focused support to ensure that sounds in words were read correctly and pupils made strong progress. The quality of education in early years has ensured that the percentage of pupils achieving a good level of development is consistently above the national level.

Progress and attainment are strong in key stage 1. In the past three years, the percentage of pupils reaching the expected standard in phonics by the end of Year 1 has been consistently above the national level. Attainment in reading, writing and mathematics in 2018 at the end of key stage 1 was above the national level at the expected standard, and at greater depth.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding and you have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You ensure that all staff and volunteers are appropriately checked before they start to work or volunteer at the school. There are strong induction procedures in place for new staff and volunteers.

All staff receive regular training and are knowledgeable about all aspects of safeguarding. They spoke of the need to be vigilant and knowing how to record and refer their concerns to you as the designated lead for safeguarding. Child protection concerns are followed up carefully and records are stored securely. You ensure that safeguarding practice is strong by undertaking regular reviews of safeguarding procedures with governors.

Pupils told me that they feel safe in school. They report that bullying is rare and they were confident that adults would sort it out quickly when it did occur. They are taught about e-safety and spoke confidently to me about how to stay safe online.

Inspection findings

- Progress and attainment in reading, writing and mathematics in key stage 2 have been less secure. Attainment in 2017 was below that achieved nationally across all subjects, at both the expected level and the higher standard. Pupils' progress in 2017 was also judged to be well below average compared with all schools nationally. The progress of disadvantaged pupils was also low. This was a small cohort which can be subject to fluctuations in attainment.
- Leaders and the governing body accurately identified the need to improve progress and attainment in key stage 2 and have taken swift action. You have a robust action plan in place that has clear targets, timescales and responsibilities, to ensure that the quality of teaching and learning across all subjects improves.
- The academy trust provides strong support and challenge for leaders. You and the leadership team meet regularly with the academy trust's schools effectiveness adviser to monitor the impact of the school's development plan. With the support of the governing body, you have tackled areas of weak teaching and reorganised leadership responsibilities to build leadership capacity across the school. This has been enhanced this year by strong professional development through the academy trust for the leaders with responsibility for mathematics and English. This has enabled them to fulfil their leadership roles more effectively and provide a sharper focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning.
- Leaders have implemented a range of strategies to improve progress and attainment in mathematics and writing. These are beginning to show some impact upon pupils' progress and attainment. The 2018 key stage 2 results show an improvement in attainment in mathematics and writing at the expected level to be broadly in line with that achieved nationally. The rate of progress also increased across reading, writing and mathematics. Attainment at the higher

standard in 2018 also improved, but was only in line with that achieved nationally in writing. Consequently reading, mathematics and the progress of the most able pupils remain key priorities in the school's improvement plan. These three areas, together with the progress of disadvantaged pupils, formed the main lines of enquiry for this inspection.

- Together we looked at progress and attainment in mathematics and reading across all year groups in key stage 2. The school's tracking system shows that in most year groups, more pupils are working at or above age-related expectations. We also observed teaching in mathematics and English lessons and looked at the work in pupils' books.
- In the mathematics lessons that we observed, we saw that the most able pupils were being challenged to reason and to apply their learning. Pupils were also helped to gain understanding through the use of practical apparatus and the support of teaching assistants. We also looked at pupils' mathematics books and saw that the most able pupils were routinely set additional challenges to deepen their mathematical understanding.
- In English lessons, we saw that pupils made stronger progress in reading when teachers used careful questioning to develop pupils' understanding of the text. We also looked at pupils' reading comprehension work together. Pupils' books showed that the most able pupils were not routinely given additional challenges to deepen their understanding of texts. Pupils told me that they enjoy reading and described the many ways in which they were now supported and encouraged to read and to comprehend.
- The writing books that we looked at together showed that pupils are continuing to make secure progress. Pupils experience a range of writing activities and are helped to assess and improve their work against clear success criteria. They have pride in their work and take care with their presentation and handwriting.
- The strategies to raise attainment and progress across key stage 2 to improve reading and mathematics are not yet fully effective. They are not embedded into classroom practice or showing sustained impact. They have yet to be monitored and evaluated carefully to ensure that they are successfully accelerating pupils' progress.
- The training for subject leaders in mathematics has strengthened their impact on teaching and learning. They are not yet rigorous enough in their roles or clear enough about the intended and actual impact of new strategies on pupils' progress.
- We also looked at the progress and attainment of disadvantaged pupils. Although pupil numbers are small and this can lead to fluctuations in attainment, the school's tracking data shows that a greater proportion of pupils are on track to make progress that is in line with that of their peers. However, the impact of interventions is not reviewed frequently enough to ensure that interventions are having the impact that is intended.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers consistently provide appropriate challenge, particularly in reading for the most able to ensure that they make strong progress
- they continue to develop the roles of the leaders for English and mathematics and ensure that new initiatives are monitored and evaluated carefully to ensure their positive impact
- they more closely monitor and evaluate the progress of disadvantaged pupils to ensure that they make consistently strong progress from their different starting points.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the chief executive officer of the Lincoln Anglican Academy Trust, the director of education for the Diocese of Lincoln, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Lincolnshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Heather Hawkes
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you and with subject leaders with responsibility for mathematics and English. I also met with four governors (including the chair of governing body), the schools effectiveness adviser and the chief executive officer from the Lincoln Anglican Academy Trust. I visited all of the classrooms with you and we looked at pupils' work together. I spoke with pupils informally during lessons and formally during a group discussion.

I also observed pupils' behaviour around the school and in lessons. I examined a range of documents, including safeguarding records and policies, information relating to pupils' attendance and behaviour, and the school's self-evaluation and school improvement plan. I took into account the 22 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, and the six responses to Ofsted's free-text service. I also spoke with a small number of parents at the start of the school day and considered the nine responses to the staff survey and the 31 responses to the pupil survey.