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Matthew Reetz  
Executive Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Reetz

### **Short inspection of Abbey CofE Academy**

Following my visit to the school on 12 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 the school was judged to be good in July 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 and your associate principal have driven significant improvements across the school. Leaders have a clear and detailed understanding of the school's strengths and areas where it can further improve. Your self-evaluation of the school is accurate and detailed, and you have clear and focused plans for improvement.

Recent changes to the behaviour policy have had a positive impact across the school. Pupils told me that they felt behaviour in lessons and at playtime was good. Pupils were focused and on-task in all the lessons I observed during the inspection. They follow the clear systems and structures which are now in place, responding well to praise and rewards. Teachers have taken greater responsibility for managing behaviour in class and their expectations are clear.

Pupils are happy and well cared for at the school. They know that staff will always listen to concerns and act upon them promptly. Vulnerable pupils are given appropriate and timely support. Pupils particularly enjoy the leadership opportunities that are on offer, such as playleaders, buddies and house captains. They are proud of their school and enjoy the learning opportunities that the teachers plan for them.

At the time of the last inspection you were asked to improve pupils' attainment and accelerate their progress by ensuring that you improve the quality of teaching in mathematics. You were also asked to raise the achievement of pupils by providing

more opportunities for them to develop their mathematical reasoning. You have introduced a new approach to teaching mathematics. This led to significant improvements in pupils' attainment, increasing from 47% achieving national expectations in 2016 to 65% in 2017. Attainment has risen again in 2018 but remains below the national average.

Leaders were asked to improve the progress pupils make in their reading by encouraging them to develop a love of books and ensuring that all teachers provide regular opportunities for pupils to read for pleasure. Daily reading now takes place across the school and pupils told me that they enjoy these sessions and that they have helped broaden their reading choices and their vocabulary. Pupils read widely and often both in and out of school. The new library is vibrant and welcoming, it has a good range of books for pupils to choose from. Reading attainment is now above national averages.

Leaders were also asked to provide additional constructive and creative activities for pupils at break times. The school now runs a range of extra-curricular activities which the pupils enjoy, for example dance, sport and craft clubs.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. All staff are vigilant of pupils' welfare and they have positive relationships with them. Staff attend regular training and understand their responsibilities and the processes to follow. Staff are aware of the new guidance and statutory information. Pupils say that they feel safe at school; they told me that they always have someone they can talk to and staff will always help them.

Most parents who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire, Parent View, agree that their children are safe in school. Pupils are taught how to stay safe in a variety of situations. Older pupils were clear on how to stay safe online, both at school and at home, but younger pupils had limited knowledge of this. Pupils told me that they rarely witness any bullying at school and that, if they did, they know to speak to an adult and were confident that the adults in school would help them.

### **Inspection findings**

- You have clearly identified that not all pupils achieve as well as they could in mathematics. Leaders have carried out extensive research alongside other schools in the trust. You have recognised that a balance of fluency and reasoning is needed to ensure that pupils' achievement improves. In lessons, we saw teachers use effective questioning to probe further into pupils' understanding. Pupils clearly enjoy and respond well to this dialogue. Pupils' workbooks show that work is pitched appropriately for their age and that some pupils are accessing more challenging work. However, too many pupils do not get to the more challenging task.
- Leaders have rightly identified that progress in mathematics needs to improve. Teachers are starting to use assessment information to inform their teaching in

mathematics. This is particularly effective in Year 6 where teachers confidently plan activities that closely match the needs of the learners. This is not yet consistent across the school and teachers do not always adapt the learning to accurately build on prior knowledge and understanding.

- Teachers offer regular and insightful feedback and pupils have time to correct past mistakes. Pupils also have time to reflect on their learning at the end of each lesson, but this can be rushed. Pupils do not always use this information to help them understand how they can improve and make progress in their mathematics.
- The curriculum is rich and broad. Work in pupils' books clearly demonstrates the wide variety of topics covered in lessons. Pupils are enthusiastic about the range of topics. The curriculum is well planned and monitored by leaders who ensure that there are opportunities for repetition of skills while being flexible to ensure that the learning engages pupils. Opportunities for mathematics and writing are woven into the curriculum. Pupils could tell me which different religions they had learned about and they knew the importance of learning about different faiths.
- Governors are clearly dedicated to the school. They have, more recently, visited the school to see lessons and daily activities of both staff and pupils. They regularly read reports from the executive headteacher. However, governors do not know the strengths and weaknesses of the school in enough detail and are therefore unable to challenge the leaders and strategically support the development of the school.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- continue to raise attainment in mathematics by further developing the teaching of mathematics so that work challenges and engages pupils of all abilities
- ensure that opportunities for pupils to review their own learning are meaningful and help them understand what it is they need to do to improve
- ensure that governors are able to provide challenge to leaders through a strong understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development.

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

Yours sincerely

Rebecca Ellers  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with you, your associate principal and the regional director of the multi-academy trust and shared my key lines of enquiry. I also met with two members of the governing body. I met with the school family liaison worker and the mathematics subject leader. I spoke formally with a group of pupils from Year 3 to Year 6 and informally to many others throughout the day. I considered the responses of parents from Parent View, including the free-text comments, and I spoke to some parents at the start of the school day. I visited all classes in the school, with you, spending a short time in each, and we looked at a sample of pupils' mathematics books from Year 4 and Year 6. We viewed a range of documents, including an evaluation of the school's performance and plans for further improvement, case studies, behaviour logs, attendance figures and information regarding pupils' progress across the school.