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Mrs Trudie Harkin  
Headteacher  
Cockfield Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School  
Cockfield  
Bury St Edmunds  
Suffolk  
IP30 0LA

Dear Mrs Harkin

### **Short inspection of Cockfield Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 26 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 June 2015.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

The school provides a positive and warm atmosphere within which pupils feel safe and happy. They enjoy school and the broad range of opportunities for learning, especially trips and visits. The lively displays around the school and in classrooms reflect the breadth of the curriculum well and showcase the good variety of learning experiences pupils have in subjects such as history, geography and art and design. Parents and carers are very positive about the school and nearly all feel that their children are safe and happy at school. They are particularly happy with the homework their children are given.

As the headteacher, you are ambitious for the school and clearly have high expectations of staff and pupils. In addition, your understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses is accurate and incisive. You readily share information with governors so that they are well informed. Their regular visits to school and active engagement with staff and pupils mean they are clear about the school's priorities for improvement and provide you with good support in working to achieve these. Governors are also strategic in their thinking about the school's future development, and how to achieve longer-term objectives. They, therefore, ask challenging and probing questions about how you and your staff are bringing about improvements.

You are well supported by your senior teacher, who also leads on literacy, and, together, you are actively working to improve the quality of teaching in key stage 2. This remains an issue from the previous inspection. Work is not consistently well matched to pupils' learning needs and, while assessment is being used to identify gaps in learning, planning across key stage 2 does not take enough account of what pupils need to learn next.

The work you and your senior teacher have done to develop pupils' reading has been successful in establishing good standards in phonics and effective provision for teaching reading across the school. Pupils love reading and your focus on choosing challenging texts and those that appeal to the interests of pupils, especially boys, has encouraged boys to read more and gain pleasure from their reading.

Under your leadership, the school has introduced useful frameworks for teaching mathematics and writing. These are having a positive impact on pupils' achievement, especially in key stage 1, and in helping to identify previous gaps in pupils' learning. However, they are at an earlier stage of implementation than the work in reading. Spelling has improved since the previous inspection, where it was identified as an area for improvement, but some pupils' accuracy in spelling is inconsistent.

Pupils behave well in and around the school and in lessons. They are keen to do well and focus intently on their work, readily helping one another and responding to teachers' instructions. Most are clear about how well they are doing, where they have improved their work and what they need to do next to improve further. Pupils are articulate and thoughtful and listen to one another's views respectfully. Those who join the school part way through their primary education settle in quickly.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Staff are vigilant about pupils' safety and, because they are well trained, are quick to share any concerns they have about individual pupils. As the designated safeguarding lead, you know the pupils and families in the school very well and readily provide support where it is needed. You take a rounded view of pupils when considering their safety and well-being, keeping a close eye on attendance and behaviour as well as any concerns that staff, parents or others may have about any individual. Governors exercise good oversight of the school's safeguarding policies and procedures. They work closely with you to ensure that staff recruited to work at the school have all the required background checks to make sure they are safe to work with children.

### **Inspection findings**

- As part of the inspection, I focused on the effectiveness of the school's plan for the use of the pupil premium funding to support disadvantaged pupils. This was because of the variable outcomes for these pupils and, in particular, because no disadvantaged pupils demonstrated high attainment at the end of key stages 1 and 2 in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The school uses funding to provide strong support for the personal and social development of disadvantaged pupils and the pastoral support for their well-being

is comprehensive. There is effective support for learning across key stage 1 for disadvantaged pupils which helps most of them to reach the expected standards by the end of Year 2. However, the quality of teaching in key stage 2 is not consistently good, and this has a negative impact on the learning of disadvantaged pupils.

- The pupil premium plan does not define the barriers to learning clearly enough, making it more difficult to target teaching more precisely to address these barriers. The plan is also not evaluated as well as it could be to identify what works best in enabling disadvantaged pupils to achieve as well as others, especially by the end of key stage 2.
- The second focus for the inspection was the extent to which teachers challenge pupils and extend particularly the middle-ability pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, so that they deepen their learning, especially in writing and mathematics. This was because not enough pupils achieved the higher or greater depth standard by the end of key stages 1 and 2 in 2018. None have done so in reading, writing and mathematics combined by the end of key stage 2 over the last three years. The previous inspection report identified stretch and challenge as an area for improvement.
- Pupils are being challenged more, especially in key stage 1, and the new approach to mathematics is providing greater opportunities for pupils to build new learning more securely on previous work. There is a greater focus on developing pupils' skills in explaining their thinking in mathematics. This is helping to deepen their learning. However, there is more work to do to ensure that pupils are consistently pushed forward and extended systematically. This is especially so in key stage 2, where learning in writing and mathematics is not always sequenced well enough to enable middle-ability pupils to make strong progress and achieve higher standards of work. Work is too easy at times for the most able.
- Teachers are making good use of practical equipment and visual representations to help pupils grasp important ideas in mathematics. Pupils are finding these useful. However, sometimes the work is not broken down well enough to ensure that pupils understand underlying concepts well before applying these in calculations or problem-solving exercises. This again stops middle-ability pupils from developing the secure background from which to deepen learning and improve their progress.
- In the early years, teachers and leaders are well focused on getting children to attain a good level of development across all the areas of learning. They are, however, not giving enough consideration to those children who are capable of exceeding this and ensuring that the practical, play-based learning activities that children work on independently are challenging enough. The activities in the outdoor area in particular are not developed sufficiently well to enable children to deepen their thinking.
- The final area of focus for the inspection included the extent to which the curriculum encourages boys and girls to achieve well. Girls outperformed boys in reading and writing in national tests and assessments in 2018, including in the early years and phonics. By contrast, girls did less well in mathematics than boys. Observations and information in the school indicate that work in English now takes good account of boys' interests. Consequently, they are more motivated and doing

as well as girls. They are just as enthusiastic about reading and writing as the girls. In the early years, boys are developing their writing skills well although the outdoor learning area provides few opportunities for children to practise writing.

- In mathematics, girls are finding the practical approaches to teaching helpful and are becoming more confident in solving problems on their own. There is no significant difference in their achievement or enjoyment of mathematics compared to boys.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the quality of teaching in key stage 2 is consistently good so that it challenges and extends high-ability and capable middle-ability pupils, including disadvantaged pupils
- the pupil premium plan defines barriers to learning clearly to enable actions to be targeted more precisely in order to improve the progress of disadvantaged pupils
- the outdoor area in the early years is developed further and that play-based learning activities provide a good level of challenge for children to deepen their thinking.

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

Yours sincerely

Gulshanbir Kayembe  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, your senior teacher, who also leads on literacy, four members of the governing body, including one of the co-chairs of the governing body, a representative of the local authority and a group of pupils. You and I visited classrooms together and looked at pupils' work in their books. I observed pupils in the playground at lunchtime. As part of the inspection, I examined a range of documents, policies and assessment information. These included safeguarding records, the school development plan, school self-evaluation form and records of attendance and behaviour. I took account of the Ofsted online questionnaire responses from 22 parents.