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Mrs Jo Trotter  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Trotter

### **Short inspection of Newbrough Church of England Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 2 May 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 February 2015.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

You have maintained and improved upon the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since becoming the headteacher, you have raised expectations and developed your staff, so that the quality of teaching has improved. You have managed some turnover in teachers well, and teachers appointed since the last inspection are flourishing. When we visited lessons together, we saw some strong, lively teaching that skilfully moved the pupils forward in their understanding. The representatives from the diocese and the local authority that I met with told me they felt this was now typical of teaching in the school. Both told me teaching was now considerably better than it had been in the past. In key stages 1 and 2, we saw knowledgeable teachers who were clear in their objectives. They challenged their pupils and continually checked their level of understanding through skilful questioning. It was clear, for example, that the pupils were growing in confidence and could apply their knowledge of grammar to great effect when writing narratively about Augustus Gloop, a character in Roald Dahl's 'Charlie and the Chocolate Factory'. In the early years, we observed adults working skilfully with children in the excellent outdoor environment. Adults intervened thoughtfully, helping children to develop, describe and extend their play. The outdoor environment you have created allows children to take risks. For example, we observed some boys building a raised pathway by assembling heavy wooden reels and planks. The adult intervention helped the boys to estimate distance, communicate well with one other and make ongoing safety checks. As a result, the children developed a greater understanding of the world around them.

As well as improving the quality of teaching, the last inspection asked senior leaders

and governors to give middle leaders more opportunities to check on what is happening in their subjects. Since then, you have successfully developed the leadership skills of your staff. They readily share responsibilities with you and proactively develop the curriculum within each subject. Early years provision has become a strength of the school and the diocese now sends other schools to you to learn from your practice. Your staff are now better at checking on the quality of provision and providing guidance to one another. You encourage your staff to innovate and experiment. Consequently, your teachers are leading their subjects with energy and purpose.

All parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, would recommend the school. In their written responses to Parent View, many were keen to praise your leadership and the links you have fostered with the community. They told me how much they value the caring culture in the school, the quality of the teaching and innovations such as the 'early bird' physical education weeks and the community lunches. The pupils I met with were also very positive ambassadors for the school. They are excited by the topics they cover. They told me they feel safe, that everyone behaves well, and that there is no bullying. The many and well-considered approaches used to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are ensuring that pupils are involved in their community, aware of diversity and accepting of their responsibility for helping others. For example, older pupils act as 'the head of the table' at lunchtime. Your pupils are being well prepared for life in modern Britain. Indeed, you have successfully fostered a caring 'family' culture within the school that parents and carers very much appreciate.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You lead the school's work on safeguarding effectively. You are ably supported by a knowledgeable governor, and together you make regular checks to ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You make all necessary checks on adults who work in or visit the school. Since becoming headteacher, you have not needed to make any child protection referrals to the local authority. Nevertheless, you continue to ensure that you and your staff keep their safeguarding training up to date and remain vigilant. It is clear you know each child in the school very well and are very watchful for any signs of concern. Your personal, social, health and economic education programme covers topics such as online safety and fire safety effectively.

### **Inspection findings**

- In this inspection, I wanted to look closely at the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, because the last inspection identified some variability. Your checks, and those of the local authority school improvement partner, show a picture of steady improvement in the standard of teaching over time. Our visits to each class support these findings. Your teachers show a good grasp of subject knowledge and some display outstanding teaching skills. As a result, almost all pupils in the school are making at least good progress. You have, however, identified a group of children in the Nursery Year who are making weaker

progress. You have begun to provide extra help to improve their speech and language development. When we visited the Nursery, it was still evident that these children find it harder to listen attentively and to sustain their concentration.

- My checks on pupils' workbooks found standards of presentation and handwriting to be good. I did note some pupils in key stage 2 make too many spelling errors with common and subject-specific words. You agreed, and you think that weaker phonics teaching in the past is the reason why some pupils are not clear about spelling patterns. Your teachers' efforts to overcome this and improve pupils' spelling are not yet rigorous enough.
- You have set your staff some specific targets this year. You recognised that not enough boys were working at greater depth in writing or in mathematics. Work done to improve the teaching of writing is now well embedded and standards of writing are improving. You have provided extra training this year for your teachers to further develop their understanding of mathematics teaching. Pupils' books show they are getting a good balance of practising calculation skills with opportunities to apply their knowledge to problems. Your most able pupils' books show they are being moved on to trickier problems quickly, and that these problems are challenging them to think deeply. Following your own checks on books last term, teachers are now making sure pupils go back and correct any errors or misconceptions that arise. Teachers have responded well and are challenging pupils with the potential to excel. Your current assessment information shows you are on track to reach your targets, with more pupils across the school working at greater depth. However, this improving picture still needs to be demonstrated in national curriculum tests.
- As you are a small school, I wanted to check whether the school provides a sufficiently broad and balanced curriculum. I found your curriculum offer to be a strength of the school, but one you are keen to develop further. You have well developed schemes of work in place for reading, writing and mathematics. Reading is actively promoted. Most pupils read at home every night. Their reading records show most parents actively support their children's reading. The Year 1 pupils I listened to read could confidently draw upon their phonics skills to decode new and unfamiliar words. The wider curriculum is also providing memorable learning experiences. You make excellent use of external expertise to enrich the curriculum. Around half of the pupils receive instrumental tuition. Primary sports funding is used well to get pupils involved in dance, golf and tennis. There are boys' and girls' football teams and Friday afternoon exercise sessions are well attended. Art is taught through focused days each term and the quality of artwork on display around the school is impressive. You and your staff are innovating further, with more enquiry-based topics in science and more intensive analysis of source materials in history.
- The governors are experienced and very active in the school. They have an excellent working relationship with you. They are supportive, but also know when and where to challenge. They have aligned their monitoring with the priorities in the school development plan, and consequently have a good understanding of the progress the school has made since the last inspection.

## **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- there is a sharper focus on improving pupils' spelling
- improvements in the teaching of mathematics are fully embedded, so that more pupils attain the higher standard by the end of key stages 1 and 2
- the extra help being provided for a group of children with lower starting points in the Nursery is carefully monitored to check they are catching up with their peers, especially in their reading, writing and number skills.

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

Yours sincerely

Chris Smith  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During this one-day inspection, I met with you, the subject leader for mathematics and the chair of the governing body and three other governors. I also met with representatives of the diocese and the local authority. I talked to a group of pupils and listened to some Year 1 pupils read. Together, you and I visited all the classes to look at the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. During lesson visits, I checked some pupils' books and talked to some pupils about their learning and progress. The mathematics subject leader and I looked in detail at some pupils' mathematics books. The sample of books selected covered pupils with different starting points across key stages 1 and 2. In the afternoon, I sampled some topic books to look at the quality of pupils' writing across the curriculum. I looked at the 26 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, the nine responses to Ofsted's staff survey and the 15 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey. I scrutinised a range of documentation including the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning, policies and assessment information. I also checked other documents available on the school website. I focused particularly on the quality of teaching and the progress of pupils currently in the school, especially in mathematics. I also considered the breadth and balance of the curriculum, the work of governors and the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements.