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Mr Michael Smith
Acting Headteacher
Lady Elizabeth Hastings' C of E VA Primary School, Thorp Arch
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Dear Mr Smith

Short inspection of Lady Elizabeth Hastings' C of E VA Primary School, Thorp Arch

Following my visit to the school on 1 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 April 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.**

You have good relationships with staff and pupils. Teachers and non-teaching staff feel that you provide them with the support they need to carry out their roles. Pupils say they are happy at school and are supported well by their teachers. Pupils say that they respect the staff in school and that the staff treat them respectfully. Pupils are keen to participate in lessons. They are confident and articulate and support each other well when learning in the classroom. A large proportion of parents and carers who made their views known say that their children are happy and safe at school. The overwhelming majority of parents would recommend your school to other parents and families.

You have identified a range of areas that the school needs to develop. However, these are not closely focused enough on the most urgent priorities. The plans you have written have too many priorities and this means that these plans do not have the desired effect or take too long to make a difference. The systems you use to check the quality of teaching and learning are inconsistent. This means that teachers do not receive timely enough advice about how they can improve their teaching. Recently, there have been significant changes to the governing body. Governors have thought carefully about the skills they need to provide you with

effective challenge. This has informed their recruitment of new members. Governors have begun to consider the various ways they challenge the performance of the school. For example, the governor responsible for safeguarding has already undertaken thorough checks on the effectiveness of safeguarding.

At the time of your previous inspection, inspectors found that pupils' progress could be accelerated by ensuring that time was used effectively in lessons. Lessons now start promptly and pupils remain well focused throughout their activities. Pupils are quick to settle into their tasks. Pupils respond well to instructions and listen carefully to the opinions of others. They are supportive of one another, remaining focused throughout lessons, and this means that little time is lost.

During your previous inspection, inspectors found that teachers should take every opportunity to deepen and extend pupils' thinking, particularly for the most able pupils. When we visited lessons, we found that the questions that adults ask are used well to help pupils to clarify their thoughts. Pupils are encouraged to build on their ideas and this helps them to extend their thinking. Sometimes, the activities that are planned for pupils do not provide enough opportunity for pupils, particularly the most able, to deepen their understanding or make links to what they have already learned.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your staff place the safety and welfare of pupils as a priority. You have thorough procedures in place to ensure that all appropriate checks are made when recruiting new staff. Staff who are new to the school receive induction training, and this allows them to be vigilant from the day they arrive. You ensure that your staff are aware of how safeguarding issues can be identified. You provide staff with regular safeguarding updates throughout the year. As a result, staff are confident when talking about what to do should they have any concerns about pupils or their colleagues.

Pupils say they feel safe in school. They know who to talk to should they have any concerns about their safety and are confident that any problems they have will be resolved. Pupils say that behaviour in and around the school is good and that bullying is rare. Pupils are aware of different forms of bullying. You provide a wide range of opportunities for pupils to learn about how to stay safe, including information about how they can stay safe online. Pupils appreciate the visitors they receive that talk to them about how to stay safe. For example, pupils talked confidently about how they would stay safe in the event of a fire, following a presentation from local firefighters.

Inspection findings

- The proportion of pupils reaching the expected and higher standards in writing at the end of key stage 2 was below the national average in 2018. The proportion of boys reaching the expected standards in writing across the school was below the average for boys nationally. The progress that pupils make across key stage

2 has been average for several years and slower than the progress they make in reading and mathematics. I wanted to find out what you have done to raise achievement in writing, particularly for boys.

- The development of writing has been identified in your plans for improvement. However, little has been done this year to make improvements to the teaching of writing. The leader of English has carried out checks on the quality of teaching and learning. However, the checks that are made are not frequent enough and are not used effectively to provide teachers with advice about how they can make improvements. The training you plan to provide for teachers has not yet been carried out. This means that they have been unable to make further improvements to the quality of their teaching.
- Despite this, when we looked at books, we found that pupils have opportunities to write for a range of purposes. Pupils are encouraged to use their knowledge of spelling patterns and grammar when they produce pieces of writing. The presentation of work is neat and pupils develop their handwriting skills as they move through the school. Pupils in key stage 2 have good opportunities to write at length and produce well-structured pieces of writing. They make good use of opportunities to edit and improve their work and this helps them to make good progress. Overall, there was little difference in the quality of writing that boys and girls produce.
- Pupils in key stage 1 have less opportunity to practise their writing skills. Some of the most able pupils in key stage 1 find work too easy. In mixed-age classes, this is more evident where the most able pupils are the oldest pupils in the class. This means that progress is limited for some of the pupils in key stage 1, particularly for the most able. You recognise this is an important area for improvement.
- In 2018, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 1 was below the national average. I wanted to find out how effective the quality of teaching is in key stage 1 so that more pupils reach the expected standards.
- Teaching assistants provide timely support for pupils, and this helps them to tackle the activities they are given. Teachers give clear instructions, and this helps pupils to understand what they need to do. Teachers move around the classroom to check how well pupils are doing. However, sometimes this is not done thoroughly. There are occasions when work is not well matched to the needs of pupils, particularly for the most able pupils. This means that some pupils spend too long carrying out tasks that are too easy. Evidence of work in books shows that sometimes pupils, particularly the most able, could do more.
- The information you provide on your website shows that you provide a broad curriculum for your pupils. I wanted to find out whether the curriculum you offer provides opportunities for pupils to build on what they know each year so that they make good progress in subjects other than English and mathematics.
- Subject leaders have a clear understanding of what it is they would like pupils to be able to do by the time they leave the school. You have started a period of review and subject leaders have begun to check curriculum plans to ensure that pupils receive their entitlement to the national curriculum. You have begun to introduce opportunities for subject leaders to check the quality of teaching and

learning. The leader of science has a good understanding of how well science is taught in school. However, leaders do not yet use their checks effectively to improve the quality of teaching in subjects other than English and mathematics. You are unclear about how well pupils are achieving in some subjects because the systems for checking pupils' achievement are not used consistently.

- We looked at the work pupils produce when they are taught geography. A broad range of geographical skills are evident in books, and pupils are encouraged to use appropriate vocabulary such as 'biomes' or 'climate'. Work in books shows that most pupils make good progress in geography. However, there is sometimes a difference in the challenge and expectation of pupils of the same age. Where pupils of the same age are divided into two classes, books show that there is a higher expectation of those pupils who are working with an older age group. This means that some pupils of the same age group are limited by the arrangements you have made for class groupings.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- plans for improvement are tightly focused on the school's priorities
- checks on the quality of teaching and learning are used promptly to provide teachers with further advice or support
- pupils in key stage 1 have more opportunity to apply their writing skills and that the most able pupils in key stage 1 are sufficiently challenged
- curriculum leaders make thorough checks on the quality of teaching and learning in their subject and use this to make improvements
- teachers expect the same high standards of pupils of the same age who are taught in mixed-age classes.

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

Yours sincerely

Jaimie Holbrook
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met you and explained my lines of enquiry. I also met with members of the governing body, a representative from the local authority, the subject leaders for English, science and geography and the designated safeguarding

leader. The 82 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and 81 free-text comments were considered. One response to Ofsted's questionnaires for staff and 36 for pupils were also reviewed. We visited classes together in key stages 1 and 2. I observed pupils' behaviour in lessons, met with a group of pupils and looked at samples of pupils' work. I viewed a range of documents, including leaders' evaluation of the school's current performance and its plans for further improvement. I considered a number of policy documents, including those for safeguarding. I examined the school's website to check that it meets legal requirements on the publication of specified information.