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Mrs Sally Howley
Headteacher
Brown's Church of England Primary School, Horbling
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Dear Mrs Howley

Short inspection of Brown's Church of England Primary School, Horbling

Following my visit to the school on 30 April 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 2014.

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.**

Since the last inspection, the school became an academy in 2016 as part of the Lincoln Anglican Academy Trust. You became headteacher in April 2018, having been the acting headteacher from October 2017. You and the leadership team have worked hard to maintain a positive learning ethos during a period of staffing instability and significant changes within the school. You have shown tenacity and determination in facing these challenges and have a clear vision of how the school needs to improve. With the support of the academy trust and the school's new local council, you are beginning to address some of the inconsistencies in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in order to improve pupils' outcomes.

The school is a small village school and pupils feel that this helps build a strong sense of a family community within the school. It has a distinct Christian ethos and the values that are promoted create a learning environment where pupils feel valued and respected. They described the school as a welcoming and inclusive place to learn. Pupils told me that, 'There are no dark corners in this school; every corner is light and friendly.'

Pupils enjoy the many learning opportunities that the school provides and are proud

of their school. As a result, they try hard, behave well and display excellent manners. They were keen to tell me about the visits and activities that they experience. They value the opportunities to take part in sporting activities with other schools and appreciate the residential visits and outdoor learning experiences that are organised for them.

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. Older pupils take part in the Archbishop of York Youth Trust Young Leaders Award, raising money for charities and improving the local community. Pupils spoke to me about these activities and said that they helped them to develop respect for other people and to build their self-confidence.

Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school, and all who gave a response would recommend the school to another parent. They feel the school provides a tailored educational experience which recognises and fosters children's individual talents. They feel that there is strong collaboration between school and home, and that their concerns are listened to and acted on quickly.

Members of the school's new local council (formerly the governing body) know the school well and are committed to helping the school improve. The new pilot framework of delegation by the academy trust has clarified their roles and responsibilities, which encourages more people to become involved. This has enabled them to focus on building community engagement. Their weekly stay and play sessions are successfully developing parental involvement.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding. As the designated safeguarding lead 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. Induction procedures for new staff appointments are thorough.

All staff receive regular training and are knowledgeable about safeguarding. They spoke of the need to be vigilant and to know how to record and refer their concerns. Child protection issues are followed up carefully and records are stored securely.

Pupils told me that they feel safe in school. They value the system that allows them to report to the teacher how they are feeling so that their concerns can be dealt with in a confidential manner. Pupils report that bullying is rare and that it is dealt with quickly when it happens. They are taught about e-safety and spoke knowledgeably to me about how to stay safe online.

The key lines of enquiry that I shared with you at the start of the inspection focused on three main areas: the progress that was being made by key stage 2 pupils in

their writing, the progress and attainment of pupils in key stage 1 in reading and writing and pupils' rates of attendance.

Inspection findings

- Key stage 2 attainment in writing in 2018 at the expected standard was below that achieved nationally. The progress of pupils over the past two years, particularly those who are the most able, has been in the bottom 20% of all schools nationally for two years. This contrasts with the progress and attainment pupils make in reading and mathematics at key stage 2, which is above that achieved nationally. Attainment at key stage 1 in both reading and writing at the expected level has also been below that achieved nationally for the past two years.
- Leaders have recognised that improving progress and attainment in writing is a key area for school improvement. The English lead is relatively new to this role and is receiving training and support from the academy trust to strengthen her effectiveness in improving teaching, learning and assessment in writing across the school. Leaders have implemented a range of strategies to raise attainment and progress in writing this year. However, these have not had enough time to become fully embedded to improve the quality of pupils' writing.
- The work in pupils' writing books shows that pupils are not routinely challenged to take care with their presentation and handwriting and to apply their knowledge of spelling, punctuation and grammar to improve their work. Pupils are not always clear about what to do to improve their work. This limits the progress that they are capable of making.
- Recent staff changes have impacted on leaders' drive for improvement, and, as a result, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is not consistently good. You have built a team work approach to school development by restructuring leadership roles, and this is strengthening leadership across the school. These actions, alongside the support that the school receives from the academy trust, are beginning to help the school to move forward.
- Children get off to a strong start in the foundation stage and achieve a good level of development which is similar to their peers nationally. You have relocated the early years classroom to ensure that it provides a safe, well organised and stimulating learning environment. Lesson observations in the foundation stage, year 1 class showed that learning activities linked to the topic theme provide pupils with challenges to promote their reading and writing skills. For example, at the start of the lesson children were helped to think about the sequence of brushing their teeth before writing instructions about how to do this. Later, a group of children in the outside area were supported to follow a recipe for making toothpaste. The use of skilful questioning helped pupils to clarify their ideas and deepen their learning.
- You guided me through the school's tracking system. This showed that currently a higher proportion of pupils are working at age-related expectations and above in reading at key stage 1. Attainment at the expected standard for phonics also improved in 2018, to be in line with that achieved nationally. The pupils I heard

read were able to use their phonics skills to decode unfamiliar words, but reading books were not always closely matched to their level of reading ability.

- Together, we observed lessons in all classes. In lessons where learning was the strongest, teaching assistants actively worked alongside the teacher to engage pupils in learning. This approach was not seen consistently and, as a result, some pupils were slow to engage in learning. This was particularly evident during discussion activities at the start of lessons.
- Attendance has been below the national average for the past three years. You have adopted a more rigorous approach to monitoring poor attendance and, as a result, attendance has risen. You have also successfully reduced the number of pupils who are persistently absent. Despite these improvements, attendance remains below that achieved nationally.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to improve pupils' attendance so that it is in line with the national average
- they strengthen leadership at all levels to ensure that the quality of teaching learning and assessment is consistently good so that all pupils make strong progress
- they improve pupils' outcomes in writing by ensuring that pupils use their grammar, punctuation and spelling skills in their writing and improve their handwriting and presentation
- they carefully evaluate and monitor new strategies to ensure that they are embedded and have the desired impact on pupils' progress and attainment
- teaching assistants provide effective support for learning to ensure that all pupils make strong progress within lessons.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the school's local council, 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 the subject leader with responsibility for English. I also met with four members of the school's local council, including the chair of the local council. I also met with the school's effectiveness adviser and the chief executive officer from the Lincoln Anglican Academy Trust. I visited all the classrooms with you, and we looked at pupils' work together. I also heard two children read. 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 considered the 21 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, and the 19 responses to Ofsted's free-text service. I also spoke with a small number of parents at the start of the school day and reviewed the seven responses to the staff survey and the 40 responses to the pupils' survey.