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Mrs Laura Schultheiss
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Dear Mrs Schultheiss

Short inspection of Old Newton Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 13 June 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 December 2011.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection of the predecessor school.

Your pupils fully embody the Christian values of your school and are thoughtful and respectful to each other, to adults that work with them and to visitors. They clearly enjoy their experience at school and are articulate in expressing the way that teachers support them. Their understanding of British values and citizenship is strong as a result of the wealth of opportunities provided to extend their knowledge.

Pupils' attitudes to learning are extremely positive; they are eager to talk about their work and their books demonstrate that they take great pride in it. Pupils are very appreciative of the opportunities provided by the school to engage in a broad curriculum and are very enthusiastic about the chance to engage in a wide range of clubs and extra-curricular activities.

Parents and carers are highly positive about the inclusive, caring and 'family' nature of the school. They praised the effectiveness and regularity of communication by the school and felt fully included in the progress of their children's learning. The promotion of Christian values, the broad curriculum and provision of clubs and enrichment activities are highly valued. Parents particularly appreciate the way the school promotes pupils' increased independence and resilience and responds to individual pupils' needs. One parent, whose child transferred to the school in Year 3,

stated that she wished her child had started earlier as they were now progressing so well. The overwhelming majority of parents would recommend the school to others.

You and your team actively promote the celebration of achievement within all aspects of school life for pupils. An example is the 'Share' assemblies where a pupil is chosen each week and another is celebrating the fundraising for pupils for new playground equipment.

You have been proactive in addressing the areas for improvement that you identified following the published outcomes from the last academic year. This data showed that progress for key stage 2 pupils in mathematics and reading was not as strong as it could be and that children in early years had not achieved as highly as they could. While the published outcomes relate to much smaller than average cohorts, you have been active in addressing these issues. As a result, I saw evidence of good-quality work throughout the school that focused on embedding an appropriate level of stretch and challenge for all pupils.

Safeguarding is effective.

Your pupils feel safe in school and demonstrate pride in talking about their knowledge of how to stay safe, especially in keeping safe online. The school premises are maintained securely and pupils are appropriately supervised at all times. You and your team have ensured that all of the school staff, including midday assistants, supply staff, contractors and volunteers, are appropriately trained in all aspects of safeguarding and, as a result, they are vigilant. Your record-keeping is careful and detailed. Processes for recruiting staff are secure and meet statutory requirements.

Inspection findings

- I explored a number of lines of enquiry within this inspection. The first of these related to the ways in which you are bringing about improvements in the number of pupils achieving greater depth in mathematics in key stages 1 and 2.
- The sample of pupils' mathematics books that I viewed shows the way the reasoning strategy is increasing challenge and stretching pupils' learning. This is particularly evident in key stage 2 books, where early indications suggest this has had a positive impact on pupils' progress. This is less obvious in key stage 1.
- Parents across all year groups have attended a presentation evening on calculation, which enabled them to further support their children with mathematics homework and accelerate their progress.
- My next line of enquiry explored the ways in which you are securing improvements in pupils' progress in reading at key stage 2.
- Reading resources, both in classrooms and in the library, have been updated with high-quality texts. Year 6 pupils were very keen to demonstrate the reading activity cards that they use to practise how to achieve greater depth. These contain appropriately challenging texts. Lower key stage 2 and key stage 1 pupils

now also have access to a series of reading practice booklets that further develop their reading skills. Pupils were also eager to demonstrate their progress in reading comprehension activities and were able to explain how they had improved their core reading skills, especially inference, as a result of using the new booklets.

- Teachers focus carefully on building up pupils' knowledge of vocabulary and consolidating this knowledge within their own writing. Observations of reading lessons demonstrate a high level of challenge using model texts and literature as a basis for analysis. For example, the analysis of the 1913 poem 'Silver' by Walter de la Mare enabled pupils to engage with the sophisticated imagery in this poem, which they could then imitate in their own writing. However, the opportunities to write at length from imitating these model texts are not as prevalent in lower key stage 2.
- I also wanted to explore the provision in early years and the way in which you are bringing about improvements in the number of children achieving a good level of development and exceeding expectations.
- The new early years leader has implemented a revised assessment system and conducted a series of internal and external moderations to ensure that these assessments are accurate. I viewed a wide range of learning journeys and spoke to children, which suggested that they are on track to do well from the baseline information.
- The early years leader has also initiated an effective system of daily communication with parents through a notebook for each child. Staff use this effectively to communicate updates about their child's progress and parents use it to raise any concerns. A recent survey conducted with parents of Reception children demonstrated that they were all very clear about how to support their child's learning. This means that where any underachievement is identified, parents are quickly involved in supporting the child through homework activities.
- In an early years literacy session, children worked on retelling the story of 'Little Red Riding Hood'. From the oral retelling activity, children of all abilities were able to tackle the task through a range of different resources such as cartoon images to support writing, phoneme grapheme correspondence mats, exception word mats and alphabet charts. All children demonstrated independence and resilience within this activity, with most-able children being able to write the story without support.
- When children chose activities for themselves, they engaged in a range of tasks both inside and outside. These included making sentences from complex vocabulary choices chosen by the teacher as well as subtraction of numbers up to 100. This level of challenge is enabling more children to not only reach but exceed expectations in the early learning goals.
- Finally, I explored the steps you have taken to improve attendance and reduce persistent absence rates, especially for boys and pupils eligible for free school meals. Attendance data shows that leaders' actions have helped attendance figures to rise overall, although they remain slightly below the national average. The overall persistent absence rate has improved from last year with significant improvements in the attendance of boys and pupils eligible for free school meals.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they embed the new assessment policy for early years.
- pupils have more opportunities to write at length, especially in lower key stage 2 and to use teachers' feedback to improve their work.
- they establish the reasoning strategies that are working successfully in key stage 2 in key stage 1.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, 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

Rowena Simmons
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, curriculum subject leaders, and members of staff with responsibility for safeguarding and attendance. I carried out joint learning walks with you or your principal in all areas of the school, visiting most classes. Together we looked in depth at a range of pupils' books across all year groups and subject areas.

I referred to a wide range of school documents. These included school development planning and evaluation, and documentation relating to assessment, pupil premium, SEND, behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.

I spoke to parents and pupils in the playground and met formally with a group of pupils. I also took note of the 25 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire.

I held discussions about the school's self-evaluation and development plans with you and your principal, and we discussed the key lines of enquiry for the inspection. I also held a meeting with the chair of the board of trustees from the Tilian Partnership Trust and a meeting with two members of the school governance committee.