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Mr Andrew Davies
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Dear Mr Davies

Short inspection of Holbrook Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 2 July 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 last inspection. The school works effectively within the Derbyshire Diocesan Academy Trust, of which it became a member in September, 2016. There has been effective collaboration on school improvement programmes. Staff and governors have opportunities to exchange good practice.

Pupils enjoy coming to school. They are enthusiastic about the range of activities available to them and the friends they make. A typical comment was, 'I like learning new things.' You and your staff provide a wide range of interesting experiences for pupils to develop their learning and confidence, including a geography field trip. The school choir sings regularly in the local church. Pupils develop skills in sports, including playing cricket and football. Annual residential trips in Years 4, 5 and 6 help build pupils' confidence and resilience. Pupils leave Year 6 very well prepared for their next stage of education.

Pupils are proud of the different roles and responsibilities they take on, such as membership of the school council and being table captains, who look after the infant children at lunchtimes. They organise and run events to raise money for local, national and international charities. They were particularly proud of supporting the recent 'shoes for Africa' appeal. Pupils are confident, polite and articulate. They understand and appreciate diversity. Pupils visit places of worship, including the

local church and a mosque in Derby. They learn about different cultures through the curriculum. They get on well together, work hard and enjoy socialising with each other. They are confident that were they to have a concern it would be dealt with quickly and effectively.

Parents and carers speak highly of your leadership and the care shown by staff. They are welcomed into school to see how well their children's work is improving and they attend workshops to find out how they can support their children's learning. They are appreciative of the range of activities which enrich the curriculum such as sports clubs, the choir, trips and visitors. A typical comment was, 'This is a happy school.'

There is a culture of developing staff. They work collaboratively with schools in the trust and more widely, exchanging good practice and developing expertise. Pupils' progress is monitored regularly through conversations with teaching staff. Together, you have identified areas for improvement and, with staff, are raising expectations of what pupils can achieve in lessons and over time.

The governing body provides effective support to the school. Governors understand the importance of holding the school to account and have a system in place to ensure that leaders are sufficiently challenged. They make regular visits to check on the school's work towards meeting its priorities. The governing body has a wide range of skills which they keep up to date through regular training.

Leaders of mathematics and English are relatively new to post. While they are checking the impact of initiatives, some of which are new or are in the process of being embedded, occasionally this is not done precisely enough to make sure that it is highly accurate across the school. During our tour of the school, we noted that in some classes teachers were not effectively designing tasks to ensure that the most-able pupils made the progress of which they are capable in writing and mathematics. Pupils' books showed that some tasks did not challenge these pupils sufficiently. Leaders need to have a clear focus for bringing about improvements in writing and mathematics.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Records are detailed, well organised and kept securely. Policies are reviewed and regularly updated. Recruitment procedures are followed and are thorough. Training is up to date.

Leaders have developed a strong and effective culture of safeguarding. Staff receive regular, good-quality training. They are knowledgeable about their responsibilities. You use your breadth of knowledge well to engage a range of external support services to meet pupils' needs.

Pupils feel safe because of the guidance made available to them through the curriculum. They receive regular reminders about keeping safe online.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection, the quality of teaching and learning of English and mathematics was observed across the school. Published information in 2018 shows that at the end of key stage 2 the proportion of the most-able pupils achieving the higher standard in writing was below the national average and progress in writing was also below the national average. At the end of key stage 1 the proportion of pupils who achieved the expected standard in writing was below the national average as was the proportion of the most-able pupils achieving greater depth.
- Leaders have begun to introduce a consistent approach to teaching writing. Pupils have access to and use engaging texts to develop their vocabulary and enthusiasm to write. Books show that skills in spelling, punctuation and grammar are taught regularly and systematically to give structure to writing and to make it more effective. The curriculum is being used to engage pupils in interesting writing tasks. For example, in key stage 2, pupils were planning a persuasive argument about the introduction of otters to the River Derwent. Using their scientific knowledge, awareness of the impact of pollution and drawing on first-hand experience of a field trip to the river, they were generating complex sentences to form a persuasive argument. In key stage 1, pupils were developing their phonic skills so that they could write sentences with greater accuracy. In the early years, a group of children were practising saying sentences about a topic. They linked sounds and letters with accuracy while purposefully writing sentences in sequence. Leaders are developing cross-curricular work still further to improve the range of and purpose for writing. However, this modification is recent and is not securely in place across the school.
- Leaders have recently introduced steps to improve handwriting. This is yet to be fully embedded across the school. There is an inconsistency in pupils' style and some handwriting is difficult to read and not well formed.
- In mathematics, published information in 2018 shows that by the end of key stage 2 the proportion of the most-able pupils achieving the higher standard was below the national average. Progress in mathematics was below the national average. You have refined teaching to increase fluency in arithmetic and to deepen and broaden pupils' knowledge and understanding of mathematical processes to solve problems of increasing complexity. Work in books and discussions with pupils show that increasing proportions of pupils are able to solve complex number problems confidently. In key stage 2, for example, pupils were using a range of calculations to answer mathematical problems. Observation of lessons and scrutiny of pupils' work showed examples of pupils analysing questions and applying reasoning to mathematical problems. However, subject leaders do not check well enough that teachers use their knowledge of what pupils know when planning the next stage in their learning.
- Discussions with leaders highlighted that they need more time to further develop their skills to use information effectively from their monitoring activities. The school is developing its assessment system to ensure that it provides relevant progress information for teachers and leaders. Developing an effective assessment system alongside monitoring activities will enable leaders to have a

comprehensive view of progress across the school for all pupil groups.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers adapt learning tasks consistently to ensure that pupils, particularly the most-able, are sufficiently challenged and make stronger progress in writing and mathematics
- subject leaders check the impact of initiatives and are precise about what needs to be improved in writing and mathematics and are rigorous in ensuring that improvements are made.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the multi academy trust, the director of education for the Diocese of Derby, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Derbyshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Elizabeth Moore
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you to discuss the school's self-evaluation and my key lines of enquiry. I met with five governors, including the vice-chair and chair of the governing body and the interim chief executive of the Derby Diocesan Academy Trust. I met with subject leaders responsible for mathematics and English and the lead of the early years foundation stage. I spoke with parents at the start of the school day and with pupils during a group discussion. I spoke to children informally during lessons. I observed the breakfast club and collective worship. I visited all classes, most jointly with you, and sampled pupils' books. In addition, I checked the school's safeguarding arrangements and records, including the school's recruitment checks on staff. I evaluated the school's documentation about pupils' achievement, planning for improvement and attendance. I took account of the 24 responses to Parent View, the Ofsted online questionnaire, including free-text responses. There were no responses to the staff or pupil questionnaires.