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Mrs Holly Marchand
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Marchand

Short inspection of Earsham CE VA Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 9 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 the school was judged to be good in January 2016.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since you took up post in April 2019, you have maintained the strong collaborative ethos that the school values, to ensure that all pupils receive effective care, guidance and support. You have quickly identified the strengths of the school and the areas for development which will help to move the school forward.

The school ethos of 'shine from the inside out' is evident in all aspects of school life; pupils show respect for one another, and staff model the highest expectations for behaviour and learning. The school is a calm, well-ordered place, where pupils and staff say they are happy to be. There are strong relationships between staff and pupils, exemplified by the school's nurture group and how well all staff know the pupils.

Parents and carers are very pleased with the school. I received 25 responses through Ofsted's Parent View survey, with 96% saying that they would recommend the school to another parent. It is clear from parental comments that parents appreciate the support their children are given and value the individual pastoral care that keeps their children safe and happy.

Governance is strong. Governors have an excellent understanding of what the school does well and how it can improve. They provide effective strategic support for the big decisions in school, such as through their stringent interview process

when appointing you as headteacher, but also provide wonderful personal support for all staff and pupils. They clearly see the school as a vital part of the community and work hard to ensure that it is a happy, successful place for everyone.

The school provides a broad, well-balanced curriculum, ensuring that pupils develop skills that will help them as they move through the school. During the day, I observed mathematics being taught across the school and clearly saw how strategies are in place to support learning. For example, children in Reception were playing snakes and ladders on the playground with a focus on counting and identifying numerals. In the key stage 1 class, pupils were using cubes to find fractions of a number in a practical way. In lower key stage 2, pupils had mathematical problems related to animals where they self-selected the level of challenge, and, in upper key stage 2, pupils used previously taught number skills to rapidly solve higher-order arithmetic questions.

Teaching is good, and pupils' progress and attainment are usually good in national tests at key stage 2. As the school has such small numbers, data outcomes can fluctuate depending on the cohort. However, the school quickly identifies any pupils who have additional needs and ensures that effective provision is put in place. Since the previous inspection, leaders have put in place specific actions that have had a positive effect on areas identified for improvement.

Safeguarding is effective.

The school has a strong culture for keeping children safe. All safeguarding requirements are carried out effectively. Staff and governors talked confidently about procedures and what actions to take if there is a concern. Each staff meeting has a designated time for discussion regarding any safeguarding concerns, so issues are quickly identified, and action can be taken. Pupils across the school say they feel safe at the school and that behaviour around the school is good. They are confident that, if any issues arise, they will be sorted out swiftly by adults in the school. They are aware of how to stay safe online.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry was about how leaders are ensuring that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive appropriate provision and make strong progress, as there has been a recent change in leadership. Since your appointment as headteacher in April 2019, you have also taken on the role of special educational needs coordinator. This has been managed very effectively, with a smooth handover from your predecessor. You have ensured the continuation of effective leadership.
- You have a very comprehensive understanding of pupils' different needs across the school and have already ensured that planning enables pupils to work independently and not become over-reliant on adult support. Your clear monitoring and tracking systems, along with evidence in classrooms, show that pupils with SEND are making sufficient progress in all areas of the curriculum.

- My second line of enquiry was about the contribution of subject and middle leaders to school improvement and their impact, particularly on pupils' personal development, as this was an area for improvement in the previous inspection. I found that subject leaders have a thorough understanding of their areas of responsibility and they monitor and lead developments in teaching and learning. Using a specific audit tool, they have made checks on pupils' personal development and used the results to plan appropriate support for pupils' individual needs. Leaders ensure that suitable coverage of each subject takes place, and there are some planned events during the year to provide enrichment; however, pupils are not hugely excited and inspired by the curriculum.
- My third line of enquiry was about how the school makes sure that all pupils make enough progress in mathematics. During the inspection I observed mathematics being taught across the school and looked at pupils' work in their books. There is clear evidence that consistent teaching has helped pupils to learn and develop appropriate mathematics skills that enable them to make sufficient progress.
- Books show neatly presented work with opportunities for pupils to practise and embed methods for calculations and to develop conceptual understanding. Pupils work hard and are keen to do well. They produce large volumes of recorded work, but the work can be very repetitive at times, without enough practice in reasoning mathematically and solving problems. This is why few pupils attain greater depth in mathematics by the end of key stage 2.
- My final line of enquiry was to look at whether reading has improved since the previous inspection so that pupils are making better progress. During the day, I met with a group of pupils comprising all age groups, including Reception. Each pupil was able to tell me how they learned to read at school and shared their chosen books with me. Books were well matched to reading ability, providing enough challenge to help develop the pupils' reading skills. Pupils in key stage 1 talked confidently about how phonics helps them with their reading, and pupils in key stage 2 discussed how they receive reading support from adults in the school to develop their reading skills.
- Leaders explained how changes made in approaches to the teaching of reading by extending the range of books available have made a difference. These adjustments have had an impact on improving pupils' desire to read and their enjoyment of reading. Pupils are now more engaged in their reading, because they are reading more engaging high-quality texts. More reluctant readers are now keen to read out of school, and, subsequently, pupils' skills in reading, and therefore their progress and attainment, continue to improve.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- more pupils attain greater depth or the higher standard in mathematics at the end of each key stage, by increasing opportunities for them to solve problems and reason mathematically

- leaders develop and enrich the curriculum to make it exciting, challenging and inspirational for pupils.

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

Yours sincerely

David Milligan
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I spoke with you, your subject and middle leaders, a local authority adviser, the business manager, governors, staff, parents and pupils. We observed teaching in Reception, key stage 1 and key stage 2. I also heard pupils from Reception to Year 6 read. I looked at the single central register of pre-employment checks. I also looked at a range of books from across the school. I observed pupils on the playground and saw your pupils in Years 5 and 6 performing their end-of-year production. I scrutinised 25 responses from Ofsted's online questionnaire Parent View and 12 responses to the online staff questionnaire.