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8 December 2016

Mr Titus Cotton
Headteacher
Overstrand, the Belfry, Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School
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Dear Mr Cotton

Short inspection of Overstrand, the Belfry, Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 8 November 2016, 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 May 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have used your school motto, 'happy children learn', very effectively. As one parent commented, 'The school continues to change and improve. There is a real sense of drive, both with staff and children. It seems everyone is working with high expectations – I am very happy with the whole package.' The vast majority of those who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and through text messages, agree with this view.

Another feature of the school that a lot of parents commented on was the strong sense of community. Their children 'thoroughly enjoy' coming to school every day and 'thrive' in the 'can do,' caring and supportive atmosphere you create for them.

Since the last inspection, there have been a number of changes in the teaching staff profile. You have built an effective team whose members work together to provide good learning opportunities and good support for the pupils. Staff say that you have high expectations for pupils' outcomes and that there is much greater rigour and focus on improving pupils' achievement, especially over the last two years.

You and the governors have accurately evaluated the school's strengths and weaknesses. You have tackled poor progress in mathematics by introducing a new approach to teaching the subject. This was not as successful as you had hoped in

the first year because teachers and pupils found the new teaching approach difficult to get used to. Since September, there is a very different story. Teachers are now confident in using the new approach, and pupils understand that they are required to think and work things out for themselves. As several pupils explained, 'We learn a lot more than we used to because the teachers give us examples before we do the real thing. They give us an example and we do the rest.' This is already having an impact on current achievement, and most pupils, including those in key stage 1, boys and middle prior attainers, are on track to achieve much better results than last year.

You track pupils' progress very carefully and have put effective approaches in place to support pupils who need additional help. You have organised the school day so that teachers have time every day to work with pupils who need more explanation, for example, of a new topic in mathematics. You have also set up an effective programme of catch-up sessions led by teaching assistants to fill any gaps in pupils' knowledge, skills or understanding.

The governors recognised that your class teaching commitment was preventing you from monitoring and supporting teaching and learning. As a result, they have rightly made sure that you have the time you need to lead the school and to ensure that pupils are being taught well and are making good progress.

You have recognised that the most able readers in key stage 2 are not making the progress of which they are capable. You and the teachers are in the process of making sure that the good systems for checking pupils' reading and encouraging them to be enthusiastic, fluent and frequent readers in key stage 1 continue in key stage 2.

Safeguarding is effective.

Parents are rightly confident that when they leave their children at school, they are learning in a 'safe and secure environment'. You and the staff work together to create a close-knit community where staff care for pupils and, as a result, pupils care for each other. Pupils play happily together at breaktimes and lunchtimes and say that they have lots of friends who are 'nice to us'. As one pupil said, 'Playtime is a lovely time at our school. Teachers keep us safe because they are always watching out for us.'

You have managed sensitive and difficult safeguarding situations with exceptional care and consideration. In some cases, lives have been turned around as a result of the excellent liaison between you, the local authority's children's social care department, and the children's families. All the required safeguarding checks are carried out and staff and governors understand what to do if there are any concerns.

You have managed the road safety situation on the busy road just outside the school with considerable tact and skill, making sure that parents understand how to keep children safe on their way in and out of the school gate. You and the governors have rightly highlighted the urgent need for further road safety measures to the local authority and the police but so far without success. This is a matter of urgency. Although actions you have taken ensure that no child is at immediate risk of harm, the long-term risks have not been satisfactorily mitigated.

Inspection findings

- You have successfully addressed the issue of improving teaching from the last inspection. This is a direct result of you taking time to check teaching and learning every day. This year you have introduced more frequent meetings to check the progress that pupils make. Teachers say that these are challenging because you have high expectations for every pupil and you know the pupils well. They find the process helpful because it makes sure that they rapidly identify any pupils in danger of falling behind. You have also made sure that teachers are given time every day to work with these pupils individually or in small groups. It is clear from the school's own data that this approach has improved pupils' outcomes, particularly in mathematics.
- You and the staff are constantly evaluating the school. You are accurate in your evaluation and address issues as they arise, for example putting in place the catch-up programmes for those pupils joining the school later during the school year. However, pupils do not always have sufficient time to benefit fully from the programmes, depending on how near to the national tests they arrive. For example, you had a number of Year 2 pupils who arrived just before the phonics screening check and mathematics tests last year, which affected the overall outcome data for all key stage 1 pupils.
- Children start learning phonics from Reception and teachers use an effective and appropriate systematic approach. This results in good progress from their starting points for all children who are in school from the start of the Reception Year. This approach continues throughout key stage 1 so that most pupils do well in the phonics screening check in Year 1 and are confident, fluent readers by the time they start Year 3. Those who started late in Year 2 last year are beginning to catch up with their peers because they are practising their reading skills every day in class as well as attending catch-up sessions.
- There are effective systems in place for recording pupils' reading in key stage 1, but these are not consistently implemented in key stage 2. As a result, teachers are not ensuring that older pupils read widely across all subjects and genres. The most able readers tend to stick to authors they know and love and do not challenge themselves to explore different writers. They are also less confident in reading aloud with expression to communicate meaning to the listener.
- There are a few examples of where the school website does not comply with government requirements, notably on publishing information on the effect of provision made for disadvantaged pupils and all those benefiting from the pupil premium grant to improve their outcomes.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- there is a consistent and effective approach to recording pupils' reading from their starting points until they leave the school
- the most able pupils in key stage 2 are encouraged to read a wider range of books and are given opportunities to improve their skills in reading aloud, communicating the meaning of the text to the listener
- as a matter of urgency, school leaders and governors continue to work with the local authority to ensure that the main road entrance to the school is safe for pupils and parents
- the school website is fully compliant.

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

Julie Winyard
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

The focus of this inspection was to check how the school is:

- improving outcomes in mathematics, especially for middle-achievers, boys and key stage 1 pupils
- making sure that the most able readers and pupils who join the school at different times of the year achieve their best
- making sure that Year 2 pupils who did not reach the standard expected in the Year 1 phonics check catch up rapidly to expectations for their age
- doing everything it can to make sure pupils are safe when they arrive at school and leave the school premises with their parents.

During the inspection, I spoke to you, the governors, representatives from the local authority and diocese of Norwich, leaders for mathematics, English and special educational needs, the staff, pupils and parents. We observed mathematics teaching in all classes and sampled some phonics teaching. I read with less- and most-able pupils in Year 3, and most-able pupils in Years 5 and 6. I analysed the responses to Parent View, the online questionnaire for parents, and the text messages that came from parents.