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Mrs Claire Vosper
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Dear Mrs Vosper

Short inspection of Scole Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 24 May 2017, 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 July 2012.

This school continues to be good.

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

Scole Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School is a school where learning is central and is, as pupils told me, 'always interesting and fun'. Since your appointment as headteacher in September 2016, you have continued to build upon the school's strengths so that pupils achieve well. You have established a strong team that supports each other well. All adults in the school feel valued and respected, and feel that they play a significant role in moving the school forward. This was demonstrated by the different adults, teachers and teaching assistants who volunteered information to me during the inspection to show the school's many strengths. You check the quality of teaching and learning regularly and so have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Your plans for improvement are sensible and methodical and you can show the impact of these. For example, you were able to show that the school has successfully addressed the area for improvement identified by the previous inspection, which was to reduce the difference between the achievement of boys and girls in English and mathematics. You are determined to ensure that the school is outward looking, drawing on best practice beyond the school and establishing good links with local schools, for example to moderate teachers' assessment judgements and to facilitate smooth transitions for pupils to high school.

Governors support leaders well. They visit often, for example to visit lessons or to look at the impact of changes such as when 'choose by challenge' was introduced. They monitor spending, for example considering how to alter staffing with reductions in funding while maintaining high standards. Governors know how funding for disadvantaged pupils has been spent. However, they have not ensured that current plans for pupil premium funding are sufficiently well tailored towards the individual needs of the pupils for whom it is provided. Governors discuss pupil achievement regularly and check that pupils are making good progress. They question you about steps taken, for example to improve attendance for some pupils and the impact of actions taken.

Teaching is good because teachers think carefully about how to make learning engaging and interesting. For example, pupils were developing their skills in writing instructions and this was put into the context of explaining how to make a Viking sheep mask, which they had made previously. Teachers use questioning well to check on pupils' understanding and knowledge, pitching different questions according to pupils' abilities. Teachers and teaching assistants work very well together, so that pupils treat all adults as their teachers. Teachers' expectations are high; they insist that work is well presented and mark work carefully in line with the school's policy. Teachers provide time for pupils to correct and edit their work, especially their writing, so that they are able to improve it further.

The curriculum is broad and interesting with lots of additional opportunities for learning. Pupils told me about the many different clubs they are able to take part in such as archery, lacrosse and gardening. They said that there are many sporting activities provided for all ages and abilities and as a result the school has achieved the quality mark for physical education. Trips, including residential trips, are used well to promote learning and to develop pupils' social skills. Visitors such as Bhangra dancers extend pupils' knowledge of the wider world. Pupils learn about other faiths and cultures, and one pupil told me that 'It's ok to be different but really we are all the same and should be treated with respect.'

Pupils are rightly proud of their school. One pupil told me, 'The teachers always help you,' and another said that teachers 'make sure that you are learning'. Pupils said that everyone is friendly at school and that there are rarely arguments or disagreements. Pupils enjoy taking on additional responsibilities such as leading buddy groups and setting up for assemblies. Pupils behave very well in lessons. They enjoy working together and individually, and are eager to show adults their work and talk about their learning. Most pupils are very keen to come to school and attend regularly. You promote good attendance, for example by giving certificates for the best attenders and talking with parents about the importance of regular attendance at school. However, you are aware that there are still a few pupils who are absent too frequently.

Parents are mostly highly supportive of the school. Only a small number of parents responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire. Of these, the majority agreed that their child is happy in school and makes good progress. Typical of the comments received was that by a parent who said, 'My child receives a high quality and enjoyable education at this school and I would highly recommend it to any parent.' The school's own questionnaire, issued shortly before the inspection, indicated that almost every parent is happy with the school and the progress their child is making.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your team ensure that keeping pupils safe is central to everything the school does. You ensure that all checks on staff are carried out carefully and in line with requirements. Staff training is kept up to date and is effective. This is demonstrated by the concerns forms which staff complete. These show that staff know what to look for that may indicate a pupil is at risk of harm. You carefully follow up concerns and work with external agencies to ensure that action is taken when needed.

You have made sure that pupils and their parents know about keeping safe when using the internet and other technologies because this is taught regularly. You have also provided helpful information for parents, which has had a positive impact. Pupils are knowledgeable about what information they should and should not give out to others when online. They also told me that the school had provided them with a contract to sign to confirm that they understand how to keep safe online and would abide by the school's rules in respect of this.

Pupils know about bullying and what to do if they have a concern. They told me that bullying is extremely rare at school and that there is always an adult to speak to if they have any worries. Pupils said that the school is a safe place, and the majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire agree. This was also the case in the survey you and your governors carried out shortly before the inspection.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection we agreed that I would look at the progress pupils are making in writing. In particular, we looked at the achievement of boys in writing. This was because the previous inspection report identified the need to close the gap in attainment between boys and girls in writing. Published assessment information also showed that in 2016 in early years, Year 2 and Year 6, girls had achieved better than boys in writing, even when taking into account the variations between numbers of boys and girls in each year group.
- We looked at writing in all classes and saw that the standard of writing is high. Pupils in the Reception class are confident in writing sentences and reading them back. They use their strong knowledge of phonics to sound out words as they write. They form their letters correctly because adults model this carefully.
- In other classes writing is also strong, and pupils, including boys, make good progress. Pupils write often and for a range of purposes with good links made between English and other subjects. For example, in one class I saw pupils writing about the Mayans using subject specific vocabulary accurately. The wide ranging opportunities for writing ensure that all pupils, including boys, are well motivated to write and produce work of a high standard.
- Teachers support pupils well in developing the technical aspects of writing, for example using semi-colons accurately, but also provide plentiful opportunities for developing their understanding of how to write interesting stories. A typical example of the quality of writing seen was where one pupil demonstrated their understanding of how to use sentences to create suspense by writing, 'In one split second, the realm froze.'

- You track the progress of all pupils carefully and were able to show me from your own assessments that in all classes boys and girls are making equally good progress relative to their starting points.
- The second area we looked at during the inspection was how well the most able pupils are challenged in writing and mathematics. This was because in 2016 no pupil in Year 2 reached greater depth in writing or mathematics, and only one pupil from Year 6 reached the higher standard in mathematics.
- From our scrutiny of pupils' work and assessments in writing, it was evident that the most able pupils are challenged well in writing and are making good progress. Teachers prompt the most able pupils to extend their work, to use words for dramatic effect, to use paragraphs and to consider the impact of their writing on the reader.
- In mathematics, teachers encourage pupils to extend themselves through 'challenge by choice', where pupils select the challenge they feel is appropriate. In some classes this works well, but sometimes pupils are too cautious in their selection.
- Additional support provided for the most able pupils, for example in Year 2, challenges them. In this group work, adults provide good opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical knowledge in a range of contexts.
- In some classes, the tasks teachers provide for the most able pupils do not allow them to extend and deepen their knowledge sufficiently. Consequently, some do not make the progress that they are capable of, particularly in mathematical reasoning and problem solving.
- The third area that we looked at during the inspection was the progress of pupils who are disadvantaged and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. This was because the numbers of pupils included in published assessment information are very small and so outcomes vary year on year.
- I held discussions with you and your leader for special educational needs, and scrutinised assessment information, pupil individual targets and reviews. This showed that the needs of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are well met.
- Leaders ensure that provision is carefully planned and very regularly reviewed to assess its impact. Any support which is not proving useful is swiftly modified so that pupils gain maximum benefit and make good progress.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work effectively together to plan additional support for pupils within lessons, in small groups or individually.
- Pupils who have social and emotional needs are well supported through a specific programme to develop pupils' self-esteem. Adults were able to demonstrate the positive impact of this through pupils' feedback and the progress pupils make.

- The needs of disadvantaged pupils are generally well met in the school. You showed me examples of the good support that the school has provided for individual pupils and evidence of the positive impact this has had. However, you acknowledge that your current plan for pupil premium funding is not as sharply focused as it should be. You know these pupils well but are not drawing on this knowledge sufficiently to plan specific support to overcome potential barriers to learning for some pupils. As a result, some pupils do not make as much progress as they should.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- in mathematics the most able pupils are challenged consistently in all classes
- reasoning and problem solving are developed across the school so that pupils are better able to apply their mathematical knowledge
- leaders focus the support provided for disadvantaged pupils more sharply so that all pupils make the rapid progress needed to reach or exceed expected standards
- the headteacher continues to work with parents to improve the attendance of the small number of pupils who are persistently absent.

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

Maria Curry
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, your leader for special educational needs and three governors. I met with a group of pupils from Years 4, 5 and 6. I heard a sample of pupils read. I scrutinised a range of documents, including information on pupils' progress, safeguarding, development planning and the school's self-evaluation. I visited all classes and evaluated pupils' work. I checked the school's website and found it to meet requirements on the publication of specified information.