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Mrs Nicola Bond
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Dear Mrs Bond

Short inspection of West Felton CofE Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 15 March 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 November 2011.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You provide strong leadership and are very well supported by the deputy headteacher and a skilled governing body. As you know, in January 2015, governors worked with the local authority to form the Westcliffe Federation. You and the governors skilfully brought together two school communities and you and the governing body now have oversight of West Felton and one other local primary school. The federation enables staff from both schools to see and share best practice. This is having a positive impact on sustaining improvements to teaching at West Felton, as well developing the leadership and coaching skills of your staff. All the parents I spoke to see the federation as a positive move. I agree, as it is helping small schools, such as yours, to utilise and share expertise for the benefit of the pupils.

The vast majority of parents are right to be satisfied with the education and welfare provided for their children. One parent, reflecting the views of most, commented in writing, 'The school constantly strives to provide a positive and caring learning environment.' Parents are right. Since the previous inspection in 2011, you, your staff and governors have successfully maintained a strong ethos, culture and community spirit with the church and wider community. You engage successfully with parents. This ensures that the school takes exceptional care of their children and makes an excellent contribution to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils told me how much they enjoy school and many confirmed that

they form long and lasting friendships in and beyond the school community.

We analysed the reasons why last year's national assessments in key stage 1 showed an untypical decline in standards reached by pupils in reading, writing and mathematics. I understand that when there are small cohorts taking national tests, the results can vary considerably from year to year and an interpretation of trends needs to be treated with caution. For this reason, we focused on pupils' current work and assessments to establish whether the quality of teaching remains good in all five classes.

Recent assessments, pupils' work in books and direct observations of teaching and learning show that the large majority of pupils make good progress. There were only 10 pupils in Year 1 last year and half (five) reached the expected standard in phonics. Currently, the majority of pupils in Year 2 is on track to reach the expected standard in reading and writing. This means those that did not reach the expected standard last year have already caught up. Pupils' current work in books in key stage 2 shows that their writing is improving very well and they make good progress. Pupils write interesting and creative stories and factual accounts about a range of stimulating topics and projects. Although spelling, punctuation and grammar improves rapidly in Years 3 to 6, pupils in Years 1 and 2 make relatively slower progress in handwriting and, in some cases, with spelling. Leaders and staff recognise this and have already put in place measures to improve writing in key stage 1.

We also focused on pupils' achievement in mathematics. I could see that this subject is led and coordinated by a very well-qualified teacher who supports other staff across the federation. The focus on number, calculation and problem-solving is the right one and this is reflected in the priorities set out in the school development plan. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection as pupils have more opportunities now to apply their numeracy skills to a variety of problems. In addition, pupils are improving their mental arithmetic skills well, which was an area for improvement at the time of the last inspection. The large majority of pupils are on track to reach or exceed age-related standards in mathematics. However, some pupils could still reach higher standards in mathematics as assessments show that some fall just short of their expected learning targets.

You, the staff and governors have maintained the positive and supportive ethos that was found at the time of the previous inspection. This is largely as a result of very strong care and welfare provided by the staff. This is acknowledged and appreciated by the vast majority of parents. Pupils are enthused by the varied and stimulating curriculum you and the staff provide. In addition, the school has very clearly maintained strong provision for children in the early years. It was encouraging to see that governors expanded early years provision to include part-time education and care for three-year-olds in the Nursery class. The strong foundations laid in both the Nursery and Reception classes are clearly evident in the rapid progress children make in language, literacy and mathematics.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and robust. Staff recruitment, vetting and checking systems are rigorous. Teaching, support and administrative staff are well trained and vigilant, including up-to-date training in the government's national 'Prevent' duty. The large majority of parents that I spoke to and those responding by text message agree that pupils are well cared for and safe in school.

The procedures for checking visitors and staff in and out of school are very robust. The school's policy of restricting visitors' use of mobile phones or devices during school hours is applied and monitored consistently well. Indoor and outdoor areas are secure. This is because staff and governors carry out regular checks and risk assessments to ensure that pupils are safe when engaged in school and off-site activities. Staff have been well trained in first aid, including paediatric first aid for children in the early years. The before- and after-school clubs are managed well and include effective procedures for registering and supervising pupils. All early years welfare requirements are met.

Inspection findings

- The teaching I observed with you and pupils' work in books show that pupils of all abilities, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress over time in both key stage 1 and key stage 2. Pupils are enthusiastic learners and try very hard. They are enlivened by the rich and stimulating topics, visits and activities planned for them. The curriculum continues to be a strength of the school and is having a very positive impact on pupils' well-being and their personal and academic development.
- Pupils make good progress reading independently and show a genuine interest in books, authors and genres of literature. You and the staff encourage this through the many and varied events and activities planned. For example, pupils were enthused by the recent visit of a football biographer. Many pupils told me how interesting it was when a children's author recently visited during World Book Day. Older pupils are genuinely interested in poetry and characters in stories. Many pupils in Years 4 and 5 told me how they are looking forward to visiting the location of the 'The Highwayman' at Nescliffe Hill (Highwayman Cave), inspired by their studies of the characters and the historical context of the poem.
- Teachers and support staff very carefully plan activities to make learning fun and stimulating. Pupils write their own accounts of stories or special events. In geography and history, for example, the recent key stage 2 visit to Liverpool was planned and inspired by the pupils themselves. This enabled pupils to write and illustrate lucid accounts of contrasting locations when comparing their own rural community to that of a large city.
- Children in the early years are very keen learners and happily explore their local woodland areas. The children celebrate religious and cultural festivals, for example, Chinese New Year, by making 'fortune cookies'. It is remarkable to see how independent the children are when working together and helping each other. The stimulating work about 'pirates' caused excitement as the children hunted for 'treasure'. At the time of the inspection they were excitedly preparing

for a visit from, as one child put it, 'A real pirate!' The children soon learn to read, write and use numbers to calculate whether one number is larger or smaller than another. Strong early years provision has been maintained and is very well managed.

- The pupil progress packs are a very good initiative aimed at involving and informing parents about their children's learning and achievements.
- Teachers' assessments shows that the large majority of pupils in both Year 1 and Year 2 are on track to reach standards that are at or above those expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics. This represents good progress in relation to their starting points when they joined Year 1. You and the staff have rightly focused on maintaining improvements to pupils' early writing by making this a priority. You recognise, rightly, that the form and structure of pupils' handwriting and, to some extent spelling, are inconsistent in Years 1 and 2.
- Current work and assessments show that pupils in all classes are achieving well in mathematics. This is also an improvement since the previous inspection. You and the staff team are focusing now on sustaining this improvement by making sure that assessments are checked regularly and that all pupils who are capable reach or exceed age-related standards. As you know, some of the work provided in mathematics could be more challenging so that pupils learn in greater depth in order that they all reach their expected attainment targets.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to focus on raising achievement in writing in key stage 1 by improving the consistency and structure of pupils' handwriting and spelling
- achievement in mathematics continues to improve in all classes by:
 - making sure that teachers set more challenging learning targets for pupils to aim for
 - checking more frequently to make sure that pupils are on track to reach their expected targets in mathematics.

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

Yours sincerely

Charalambos Loizou
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, the deputy headteacher, the early years leader and teacher responsible for managing mathematics. I also met with the chair and one of two vice-chairs of the governing body of the Westcliffe Federation. We visited classes together to observe some teaching, looked at pupils' work in books and spoke to pupils during lessons. I also spoke to pupils during breaktime and to some parents at the start and end of the school day. I considered the 39 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and reviewed the 36 responses from parents who commented by text to Ofsted's regional office. I scrutinised the school's development plan and discussed how you and your leadership team check the quality and effectiveness of teaching across the school. You shared with me the most recent assessments of pupils' attainment and progress and we discussed the national test results and assessments undertaken by pupils in 2016. I checked staff vetting and safeguarding procedures to determine whether the school's arrangements for safeguarding are effective.