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Mrs Suki Pascoe
Executive Headteacher
North Cerney Church of England Primary Academy
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Dear Mrs Pascoe

Short inspection of North Cerney Church of England Primary Academy

Following my visit to the school on 12 June 2018, 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 June 2013.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

The school has experienced considerable changes in leadership since the previous inspection. Not all areas identified for improvement at the previous inspection have been resolved successfully. Following your appointment as executive headteacher in September 2017, you established a clear vision for the school, fully supported by your governors. You are determined that all pupils receive the best possible education and set high expectations of what they can achieve. Together with your subject leaders, you have accurately identified weaknesses and are implementing some effective initiatives to improve teaching. The recent appointment of a new leader for special educational needs and disadvantaged pupils has strengthened the school's leadership capacity, helping to increase the pace of improvement.

You are successful in maintaining the best aspects of the school's provision, in particular the way you care for pupils and foster their enthusiasm for learning. All the pupils who spoke to me said how much they enjoy school. Most parents and carers are extremely positive about the school's work, which enables their children to 'blossom' in a 'real family environment'. They are proud that their children attend North Cerney and praise the approachability of you and your staff.

The previous inspection recommended improvements in teaching to ensure that the most able pupils are suitably challenged. With the help of trust leaders, you are providing much-needed staff development and training to enable teachers to plan work that extends pupils' knowledge and skills. However, you recognise that your curriculum does not fully meet the requirements of the national curriculum or provide sufficient challenge, particularly in mathematics.

You identified that, while many pupils achieve the expected standard in writing across the school, very few exceed this. Focused daily teaching of writing skills and increased opportunities to use and apply these in writing across subjects are improving outcomes, especially for older pupils. However, you acknowledge that there is more to do to improve pupils' early writing skills and ensure that progress is strong across the whole school.

The new system to track pupils' achievement and the regular reviews of pupils' progress with staff provide leaders with a clear view of achievement across the school. You are aware that plans for the use of the pupil premium are not precise enough to ensure that disadvantaged pupils, including the most able, achieve as well as others in school.

Safeguarding is effective.

The culture of safeguarding is strong because you, your staff and governors make the safety of pupils the highest priority. All staff and governors receive appropriate training to identify possible signs of harm. Records show that teachers are up to date in their training, which includes guidance in recognising the dangers of extremism and terrorism. Recruitment and vetting procedures for appointing staff follow the statutory guidance stringently. The governor responsible for safeguarding checks that the school's single central record is maintained accurately. Governors check that staff understand how to report concerns promptly. All risks are thoroughly assessed and updated annually, for example with regard to fire safety and educational visits.

You get to know the families of children who attend North Cerney well. Staff keep a close eye on the welfare of any pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Records are of good quality and leaders work well with other agencies to secure the correct support for pupils. Parents recognise the lengths to which you and your staff go to provide a welcoming and inclusive school where their children are kept safe. Pupils confirm that they feel secure in school. They say, 'There is always someone there to help you.' They are taught effectively how to maintain their personal safety, for example through internet safety training.

Most pupils attend well and are seldom late for school. Staff work closely with other professionals to help promote regular attendance. In some cases you have been successful in reducing unnecessary absence, although the overall absence rate remains above average. A small minority of pupils do not attend regularly and this impedes their progress.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection, we met to discuss the school's progress since the previous inspection. We agreed the following lines of enquiry: how effectively the curriculum deepens pupils' knowledge and understanding across subjects; how effectively leaders are improving pupils' progress in writing and challenging the most able pupils in mathematics so they achieve the highest standards; how well the pupil premium is used to help disadvantaged pupils overcome any barriers to learning; and how well the school keeps pupils safe.
- You and your leaders are in the process of redesigning the curriculum to ensure that pupils are inspired to achieve as well as they can. Older pupils benefit from the new learning programme in how to think philosophically and debate ideas. This is helping them to express their views in a reasoned way. Pupils are knowledgeable about British values. They understand the meaning of democracy, tolerance and respect, giving examples of how these apply to school life. Together, we observed pupils investigating and discussing their ideas in science, showing good insight. However, on occasions, tasks set for the most able pupils are not challenging enough, limiting the development of a deeper understanding of more difficult concepts.
- In recent years, too few pupils have achieved or exceeded the expected standard in writing, particularly in key stage 2. To address this, you provide staff with extensive opportunities to meet with colleagues in other schools to share expertise and agree standards. During my visit, we looked at a range of written work across the school. Older pupils regularly produce writing that is of good quality and is well presented. For example, Year 5 and 6 pupils wrote lively and engaging diary entries for 'a day in the life of a guinea pig' who visited school. There are now more pupils on track to meet the higher standards by the end of key stage 2. However, we agreed that handwriting and sentence construction are not developed systematically. This prevents more pupils from making even better progress.
- Leaders have introduced new initiatives to improve pupils' rapid recall of number facts. Pupils demonstrate fluency in calculation and take pride in the presentation of their work. Increasingly, teachers set work that requires pupils to think more deeply about mathematical problems, sometimes giving reasons for their answers. Nevertheless, you and your leaders recognise that teaching does not routinely deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding in all aspects of mathematics.
- Disadvantaged pupils do not typically achieve as well as they could in writing and mathematics. We agreed that plans for the use of the pupil premium are not focused sharply enough. They lack clear and measurable targets to bring about the required improvements in attainment. Consequently, leaders and governors are not able to evaluate precisely the impact of funding or identify where strategies are successful.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- learning planned across the curriculum provides all pupils, especially the most able, with challenging work
- early writing skills are taught systematically to enable pupils to meet or exceed the expected standards for their age
- teachers plan more extensively to develop pupils' mathematical reasoning skills to enable them to solve more complex problems in all aspects of mathematics
- the school's pupil premium strategy contains a clear rationale with defined, measurable outcomes to raise standards for all disadvantaged pupils, especially in writing and mathematics
- they make greater use of the strong partnership with parents to raise pupils' attendance.

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

Yours sincerely

Sandra Woodman
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and your leaders and discussed the school's self-evaluation, information about pupils' progress and improvements since the previous inspection. Together, we observed learning in classrooms and looked at a range of pupils' work in books. I met with pupils to talk about their experience of school life. I held meetings with middle leaders and with two governors. In addition, I spoke with an external adviser from the trust who supports the school. I looked at a range of written evidence, including documents relating to safeguarding and attendance information. I took account of the written comments of 14 parents who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and those who spoke with me at the start of school. I also took account of the views of 10 members of staff and the 26 pupils who returned the online questionnaires.