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Ms Julie Wones  
Co-executive headteacher  
Catfield Voluntary Controlled Church of England Primary School  
School Lane  
Catfield  
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Norfolk  
NR29 5DA

Dear Ms Wones

### **Short inspection of Catfield Voluntary Controlled Church of England Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 19 March 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 December 2015.

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.**

Catfield Primary School is one of three schools included in the Swallowtail Federation (the federation). This academic year, there have been changes to the leadership of the federation. You have been co-executive headteacher since September 2018. The head of Catfield Primary School took on the additional role of co-executive headteacher, working alongside you from January 2019. Together you are successfully maintaining the caring, inclusive ethos that parents and carers greatly value and of which staff are justifiably proud. One pupil's comment that, 'this is a great place to learn, make friends and have fun,' was representative of the views of many of her friends. There is a happy, positive vibe throughout the school.

The school enjoys an enviable reputation among parents, who are overwhelmingly positive about the quality of education staff provide. They told me how staff have a detailed knowledge of each pupil and their capabilities. One parent's observation that the school, 'works in partnership with us so our children get the education they need,' was reflective of the sentiments of many others. You have added another teaching group to accommodate the increase in the number of pupils on roll since the previous inspection.

Pupils' good behaviour noted at the time of the previous inspection remains a strength of the school. Pupils are attentive in lessons and go about their work with good humoured enthusiasm. The routines and kind, thoughtful behaviour established in early years are evident in pupils' behaviour across all year groups.

You have a precise understanding of what the school does well and where further improvement is needed. You accurately identify that while pupils' attainment and progress are good or better within early years and key stage 1, this same consistency does not apply across key stage 2. You and your leaders know what action needs to be taken and are doing the right things to bring about improvements. However, you are correct in your judgement that the changes you have introduced need more time to be fully effective. Pupils do not yet securely build on the excellent start they make in early years and key stage 1 across key stage 2.

As part of your systematic approach to sustaining and improving the quality of education, you have rightly altered how subjects other than English and mathematics are planned and delivered. This is bearing fruit in key stage 1, where pupils make good progress across a range of subjects. The effectiveness with which the wider curriculum is implemented in the younger years is not yet replicated consistently across key stage 2. Where the curriculum is delivered well, such as in art, pupils produce high-quality work. Nevertheless, teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve in subjects other than English and mathematics vary too widely.

After the previous inspection, leaders acted to successfully improve pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar. However, following a fall in pupils' achievement in this area in 2018, you have adjusted the school's approach to teaching spelling, punctuation and grammar. Where teachers apply your preferred methods thoroughly, it has a considerable impact on improving pupils' confidence and accuracy in their written work. However, more needs to be done to ensure that all teachers consistently apply the school's new approach.

Staff and pupils are appreciative of the opportunities that being part of a wider federation affords them. For example, teachers welcome the chance to share teaching strategies and ideas with colleagues in other federation schools. Leaders also seek partnerships with schools further afield to deepen teachers' understanding of the standard of pupils' work that constitutes greater depth. The impact of this work is evident in the good quality of teaching, learning and assessment in key stage 1 and in aspects of key stage 2. Teachers create productive, harmonious classrooms in which pupils respond well to teachers' skilful questioning.

There is one governing body responsible for all three schools in the federation. Governors are conscientious, experienced and thorough in checking the quality of education. As a result, they have a clear grasp of the school's strengths and weaknesses.

Governors recognise where things are going well and challenge leaders, 'to build

upon these successes'. The governing body is equally thorough in challenging leaders to bring about improvements where they are needed. Governors are diligent in carrying out their roles with regards to safeguarding.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders, including governors, have ensured that the school's safeguarding systems are fit for purpose.

Staff are suitably trained and regularly updated in safeguarding matters. Leaders carry out random spot checks to ensure that adults' knowledge of the school's safeguarding processes is up to date. Consequently, staff understand that the smallest changes in a pupil's behaviour or appearance, 'could be an important part of the bigger picture of their well-being'. This vigilance and the shared belief that assuring pupils' well-being is everyone's responsibility contribute to the deep culture of safeguarding that exists at Catfield Primary School.

Pupils are safe and told me they feel safe. They confidently explained the strategies they use to assess risks in a variety of contexts, including when using the internet. Pupils also are well versed in what behaviour constitutes bullying and what does not. They gain this knowledge from your successful STOP ('several times on purpose') campaign. Pupils say that bullying is rare and any incidents are dealt with well by staff. Parents agree that the school deals well with bullying. Inspection evidence confirms this to be the case.

All parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, agree that their children are safe and well looked after. One parent's comment that, 'our children are greatly cared for,' was typical of the confidence others expressed in the care staff provide. Leaders' securely kept and detailed records demonstrate that pupils receive timely and proportionate help when it is needed.

Governors are diligent in ensuring that leaders carry out appropriate checks on staff working at the school. The record of these checks is accurate and well maintained.

### **Inspection findings**

- While numbers are very small in each year group, disadvantaged pupils' progress was lower than that of their classmates by the end of key stage 2 in 2018 in reading and mathematics, as had been the case in the previous year. The school educates higher proportions of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) than is typical of the average primary school. Therefore, my first line of enquiry was to establish the progress these two groups of pupils make.
- In this small school, staff quickly identify each pupil's barriers to learning, needs and capabilities. You, as special educational needs coordinator (SENCo), make

sure that each pupil receives appropriate support to help them in their social, emotional and academic development. Inspection evidence confirms that parents' confidence in your approach is well placed. One parent accurately noted that pupils, 'whatever their level of need, feel important, part of the school, not [left out] and not made to feel different'.

- You have put in place support to ensure that pupils are more able to recognise and manage their emotions and behaviour. This in turn leaves pupils well placed to succeed in their learning and they make good progress from often low starting points. Teaching assistants are appropriately skilled to carry out their roles very well. These adults have a detailed knowledge, and high expectations, of the pupils they help. With the support of teaching assistants, pupils who need additional guidance make good progress and become more independent and resilient in their learning.
- In 2018, the progress pupils made by the end of key stage 2 in reading and mathematics was lower than it was in writing. This had also been the case in 2017. Therefore, I wanted to see whether current pupils make good progress in reading and mathematics across key stage 2.
- On taking up your post, you identified that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in mathematics needed to improve across key stage 2. You and your leaders are taking the right actions: training staff, supporting them to develop their teaching practice and checking on the impact of their work.
- Teachers know what is expected of them, for example in providing pupils with tasks that consolidate their mathematical knowledge and build on prior learning. Where teachers apply this approach well over time, pupils make good progress. Nevertheless, inspection evidence confirms your judgement that the quality of teaching of mathematics remains too irregular across key stage 2. As a consequence, pupils are not consistently making the progress of which they are capable. This is particularly true of pupils who are potentially high achievers.
- You have placed a considerable focus on developing pupils' vocabulary and love of reading. Because of this, leaders, teachers and pupils understand the central importance of reading. Pupils told me that they enjoy learning to read. They are increasingly self-assured in doing so.
- Pupils read with appropriate expression, recognising and responding to punctuation such as exclamation marks in their reading. They use their phonics knowledge well to read words that are unfamiliar to them. Pupils also use their increasing range of vocabulary to work out the meaning of these words in the context of the books they are studying. As a result, pupils are increasingly accomplished readers and mostly make good progress.
- Pupils' attendance had fallen over the previous two years. School records demonstrate that the number of pupils who do not attend school as often as they should had continued to rise in the first term of this academic year. Therefore, I wanted to establish what leaders have done to reverse this trend of falling pupil attendance.
- You have taken decisive, effective action to bring about improvements in pupils'

attendance. You have sought the advice of the local authority to assist you in this work. Rightly, in your regular newsletters, you are communicating clearly to parents the importance of pupils' high attendance. Where a pupil's level of attendance falls and is a cause for concern, you and your leaders work closely with them and their family. As a result, the number of pupils who do not attend as often as they should do has fallen dramatically since the start of 2019. Correctly, you continue to work with the small number of pupils for whom low attendance remains a concern.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers consistently and effectively apply the school's new approach to teaching spelling, punctuation and grammar
- the quality of teaching, learning and assessment of mathematics improves across key stage 2
- teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve, and implement the curriculum in subjects other than English and mathematics consistently well across key stage 2.

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

John Lucas  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

I met with both co-executive headteachers to discuss the key lines of enquiry for this inspection. I also held meetings with: the school secretary; all teachers and teaching assistants in school on the day of inspection; and the chair of the governing body, along with two other governors.

Together with you, I visited each classroom to observe pupils in their learning. Both co-executive headteachers and I also carried out a scrutiny of pupils' work. I met with two groups of pupils and heard others read. I also spoke with pupils informally in lessons and at playtime.

I considered the views expressed in 35 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent

View. I also took into account the 24 comments left on Ofsted's free-text service alongside the views expressed in my discussions with parents on the day of this inspection. There were no responses to either the pupil survey or the staff survey.

I considered evidence from a range of documentation. This included: safeguarding records; the school's self-evaluation; minutes of governors' meetings; records of pupils' attendance; records of pupils' achievement; information about the curriculum; the school's pupil premium report; and the school's physical education and sport premium report.