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Mrs Susan Belton
Headteacher
St Helena's Church of England Primary School, Willoughby
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Dear Mrs Belton

Short inspection of St Helena's Church of England Primary School, Willoughby

Following my visit to the school on 23 January 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 the school was judged to be good in March 2014.

Based on the evidence available 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.**

Since the last inspection, there have been changes to staffing at the school. You have a new senior teacher who is supporting you in bringing about improvement. You have identified that pupils had not made fast enough progress by the end of key stage 2 in 2017, particularly in mathematics and writing. The subject leaders for English and mathematics are very new to their roles. They are beginning to make changes in order to raise standards.

In the last inspection report, leaders were asked to improve the standard of writing by providing pupils with wider opportunities to write. You were also asked to improve the presentation of pupils' written work. You have ensured that the curriculum provides pupils with a wide range of opportunities to write for different purposes. Pupils' workbooks show that you have developed a consistent approach to the teaching of handwriting, and pupils' presentation has improved. Teachers use topic work as a stimulus for writing. Teachers, however, sometimes do not use assessment information well enough to develop pupils' skills fully. The proportions of pupils reaching the expected standard in writing at the end of key stages 1 and 2 regularly have been below the national averages.

Parents I spoke with felt that their children are well supported and that they are happy at school. They said you have established a caring ethos where staff encourage pupils to be unique, and to get involved. Some parents were particularly pleased with the support that you provide for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, going 'above and beyond' to support pupils' needs.

Pupils said teachers make sure learning is fun. They feel well supported by their teachers, and know that there is always someone available to talk to if they have a problem. Pupils said that lessons are sometimes disrupted by poor behaviour. Pupils said that, when this happens, adults deal with the incidents quickly. Pupils enjoy the many after-school clubs available to them, including basketball, mathematics and games clubs. Older pupils enjoy the residential visits, where they can challenge themselves and try new things.

You and the other staff are committed to providing opportunities for pupils to learn about life beyond the local area. You recently ran a careers day to encourage pupils to be aspirational about future career choices. Through the broad curriculum, you have ensured that pupils understand different religions and cultures. Pupils have a good understanding of diversity and equality.

Staff are dedicated to providing pupils with the best possible learning opportunities. They are passionate about improving their teaching. They are reflective about their own practice and strive to be better at what they do.

The governing body is committed to ensuring that pupils are well prepared for life after primary school. The newly appointed chair has led the governing body through a period of change. Governors now have a sound understanding of their roles. Each governor has been given a specific responsibility linked to the school's development plan. They are encouraged to carry out monitoring visits to review the actions of leaders. The governing body is using information about pupils' attainment and progress to hold leaders to account.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You and the designated safeguarding leads have created an ethos where safeguarding is a priority for all staff. Training is updated regularly, and you have made sure staff and governors have a comprehensive understanding of the possible safeguarding risks to pupils.

Staff, parents and pupils know who they need to talk to if they have any concerns. The families champion makes sure you have strong relationships with vulnerable families. Members of the safeguarding team work well together to ensure that the needs of pupils and families are met. You have good relationships with local services, and use these well to provide support when required.

Inspection findings

- Pupils who reached the end of key stage 2 in 2017 did not make as much progress as they should in mathematics, in particular girls and the most able pupils. The mathematics leader has a plan to develop the teaching of mathematics. Recent changes, however, have not yet made a full impact on pupils' progress. Because of this, you are seeking external support to help develop the teaching of mathematics.
- The teaching of mathematics aims to develop pupils' skills systematically. Teachers have clear expectations of what they want pupils to learn. Pupils who do not understand the work receive additional support so they do not fall behind. Sometimes, however, teachers do not provide enough opportunities for the most able pupils to extend their learning. Sometimes these pupils repeat skills they have already understood and their learning slows.
- In 2016 and 2017, pupils did not make as much progress by the end of key stage 1 as they should in reading, writing and mathematics. You have identified the reasons for this drop in attainment between the early years and the end of key stage 1. You believe that past assessments made at the end of the early years were not robust enough. Some pupils were assessed at a higher standard than they were working at. Staffing in the early years has changed recently. The new staff have a good understanding of what pupils should be able to do by the end of the early years. As a result, you believe that assessments in the early years in 2017 were accurate.
- You and the other members of the leadership team have identified that not enough pupils are achieving at the expected standard in writing. You have recently reviewed how writing is taught throughout the school and have introduced a greater focus on developing pupils' spelling. Pupils' workbooks show that teachers are not using information about what pupils can already do to develop writing skills. Pupils do not fully understand how to make their writing better. The English leader is new to the role and is keen to raise standards. Changes, however, are not focused sharply enough on improving pupils' writing.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers use assessment information regularly to develop pupils' grammar and writing skills
- teachers give pupils, including the most able pupils, tasks that provide them with the right level of challenge in mathematics
- subject leaders develop their skills further in leading and checking improvements in their subjects.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of Lincoln, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Lincolnshire.

This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Helen Williams
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and the chair of the governing body. I held a meeting with four other governors. I spoke with the school's business manager, the leader for mathematics and the leader for English. I met with seven pupils. You and I observed learning taking place during the morning, including in the early years.

I scrutinised a selection of pupils' workbooks. I examined a range of the school's documentation, including its self-evaluation document, its improvement plan and documents relating to safeguarding.

I considered the views of parents by speaking with some of them before school. I also analysed the 24 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View.