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Mr Paul Henery  
Headteacher  
Acle St Edmund Voluntary Controlled Primary School  
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Dear Mr Henery

### **Short inspection of Acle St Edmund Voluntary Controlled Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 27 February 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 May 2015.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

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

You and your staff have ensured that the school is one in which pupils and staff work together harmoniously. You and your leaders have detailed knowledge of each pupil and the quality of education the school provides for them. Correctly, you are adapting aspects of the school's work to cater for the changing needs of a small number of pupils. These adaptations have helped staff to maintain the good quality of education. Published information and inspection evidence show that the quality of education in early years remains strong. Children make good progress from their individual starting points and they are suitably prepared for Year 1. Similarly, pupils make good progress in many subjects by the end of key stage 1. Their attainment in reading, writing and mathematics has typically been in line with that of other pupils nationally.

Pupils behave well; they know and respect the school's golden rules. Pupils mostly work hard, listen respectfully to each other's views, and are kind and thoughtful. They mix happily at break and lunch times. Leaders provide appropriate support for the small number of pupils who find it hard to make the correct behaviour choices. These pupils' behaviour is improving as a result.

Staff told me that their morale is high and that they are supportive of you and your leaders. Staff value the training that has improved their understanding of pupils'

barriers to learning and how to overcome them. All staff who responded to the online survey agreed they are: proud to work at the school; well supported; trusted to innovate in their work; and that the training they receive supports improvement in their practice. Most staff agree that, despite the changes you are introducing, you are considerate of their workload

The governing body is effective in its work. Governors gather information about the quality of education from a wide range of sources. They use this information to acknowledge the achievements of staff and pupils and to challenge leaders where improvements need to be made. Staff I spoke with hold the governing body in high esteem. They told me that governors are dutiful in carrying out their responsibilities, such as checking on the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Governors wholeheartedly share leaders' commitment to provide pupils with a broad curriculum that develops their creativity and knowledge of the world around them. While governors check the breadth and depth of the curriculum pupils have access to, they are less knowledgeable about its quality.

Governors and leaders welcome the help and challenge the local authority provides. This support has helped you efficiently bring about improvements where they are needed. It has also affirmed your accurate judgement of the quality of education at the school.

Most parents are highly supportive of the school's work. Parents I spoke with told me how much their children enjoy coming to school. They also explained how attentive staff are to pupils' social and academic needs. Parents also expressed appreciation for the many opportunities in the curriculum to enrich their children's learning. However, a small number of parents would welcome more timely communication about their children's education. You and the governors are, rightly, reflecting on how you can improve the school's strategies for communicating with parents.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The school's safeguarding systems and processes are fit for purpose.

You and your staff are vigilant in ensuring that pupils are safe and cared for well. Leaders, including governors, have made sure staff are properly trained and routinely updated on safeguarding matters. For example, leaders recently refreshed staff's understanding of the importance of making accurate, timely referrals to the school's designated safeguarding leaders. Inspection evidence demonstrates that when adults refer any concerns about a pupil's well-being, leaders act swiftly and effectively.

Pupils explained that they feel safe and well looked after by adults. Pupils told me that if they are anxious or worried they could talk with any member of staff.

Pupils play their full part in educating their schoolfriends about important issues such as internet safety and bullying. For example, pupils shared their views with leaders and governors and contributed to the school's anti-bullying policy. The school website shows informative videos pupils have made in which they make clear the unpleasant consequences of bullying. Pupils know the different behaviours that constitute bullying and what does not. They told me that there are few bullying incidents in their school, but that they trust that staff will sort out any bullying incidents effectively. Many parents agree that the school deals with bullying well.

Leaders carry out necessary checks on adults working at the school. Governors are diligent in ensuring that the record of these checks is accurately maintained.

### **Inspection findings**

- Since the previous inspection, pupils have typically made similar progress to that of other pupils nationally in reading and mathematics by the end of key stage 2. This was not the case in 2018. You, your leaders and governors were rightly disappointed with the progress some pupils made. Therefore, my initial line of enquiry was to establish whether pupils are now making good progress in reading and mathematics by the end of key stage 2.
- You have taken rapid and thorough action to bring about the required improvements to teaching, learning and assessment in reading. Leaders have made changes to how reading is taught and improved the accuracy of teachers' assessment of the progress pupils are making.
- Teachers and pupils have effectively embraced these changes. In line with what leaders expect, teachers have: placed greater emphasis on developing pupils' vocabulary; provided pupils with more challenging fiction and non-fiction texts; and devised learning activities that develop pupils' understanding of the context of the books they are studying. Pupils are more secure in their reading – especially when working out the meaning of unfamiliar words – and their progress is good.
- Recognising that there needed to be changes in their plans to improve the quality of mathematics teaching, leaders have made necessary, effective amendments. They have provided teachers and teaching assistants with good-quality training. Staff told me that they now have the additional knowledge and skills required when teaching and supporting pupils in mathematics lessons. Inspection evidence shows this to be the case.
- Teachers are more confident and accomplished in their teaching of mathematics. They anticipate pupils' possible misconceptions and plan learning activities that enable pupils to consolidate their knowledge of mathematics. Therefore, pupils are more assured in applying their knowledge and skills to the mathematical problems and calculations they need to complete. Teaching assistants and teachers spot pupils' misunderstandings and provide them with appropriate support. Pupils' books demonstrate that they are making good or improving progress in mathematics across key stage 2.
- I also sought to establish the progress pupils make in subjects other than

reading, writing and mathematics. Leaders, with the enthusiastic support of governors, have designed a curriculum rich with opportunities for pupils to study a broad range of subjects. Pupils explained how much they enjoy and learn from the topics they study, such as 'the hero in me'. The curriculum fulfils leaders' aim of developing pupils' creativity and knowledge of their local community and the wider world.

- Your subject leaders' skilful design of the curriculum enables pupils to develop subject-specific knowledge and aptitudes. For example, in science, pupils, including those who have the potential to be high achievers, are increasingly skilled at establishing, pursuing and evaluating their own lines of enquiry. In history, pupils build up a depth of knowledge about the eras they study. Teachers make use of carefully chosen texts related to each topic's main theme to enable pupils to practise and improve their reading and comprehension skills. Some teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve in geography are not as consistently high as in other subjects seen.
- My final key line of enquiry was to determine how well you use the additional government funding to support disadvantaged pupils. There are very few disadvantaged pupils in each year group and overall published achievement data for this group needs to be treated with caution. Nevertheless, over the past two years a small number of these pupils did not made the progress of which they are capable in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of key stage 2.
- Leaders have reviewed and rightly adjusted how they allocate the additional government funding. Leaders use their detailed understanding of each pupil's barriers to learning to provide them with appropriate support. For example, pupils receive additional help to develop the confidence, organisational skills and resilience to become successful learners. These strategies are yet to translate into academic progress for a few pupils.
- Most teachers have a good grasp of appropriate strategies that enable disadvantaged pupils to catch up with their classmates. Where these are implemented most effectively, disadvantaged pupils are making good or improving progress across a range of subjects. For example, teachers' precise focus on developing these pupils' literacy skills is bearing fruit. Pupils are improving their reading and writing knowledge and skills. Nevertheless, the attainment of some disadvantaged pupils remains lower than it should be.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- all disadvantaged pupils catch up and attain the standards of which they are capable
- teachers increase their expectations of what pupils can achieve across the curriculum, especially in geography
- governors have a clear grasp of the quality and impact of the wider curriculum
- they review and make appropriate changes to strategies to ensure that parents are well informed about their children's education.

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**

You and I discussed my lines of enquiry for this inspection. We also explored leaders' evaluation of the quality of education and information about current pupils' learning.

I met with: you; the deputy headteacher; a group of teachers and teaching assistants; two members of the administrative team; and the chair of governors and three other governors. I also met with two representatives of the local authority and held a telephone conversation with another representative of the local authority.

I examined the school's development plan and self-evaluation document and pupil premium reports. The school's safeguarding arrangements, records, files and documentation were examined.

Together with you and the deputy headteacher I observed pupils learning in every class. We looked at pupils' work to establish the progress they are making over time. I also heard pupils read. I met with a group of pupils and spoke with others informally during lessons and at breaktime. There were no responses to the online survey for pupils.

I considered the views of parents I spoke with at the start of the school day. I took into account the views of 64 parents who responded on Parent View and the 12 comments on the Parent View free-text service.

I also took into account the 14 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.