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Elizabeth Powell  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Powell

### **Short inspection of Ashby-de-la-Zouch Church of England Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 19 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 the school was judged to be good in June 2014.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. The school is held in high regard by its local community. The overwhelming majority of parents and carers who gave their views were full of praise for your school. One comment reflects how most parents feel about the quality of education you and your staff provide: 'I couldn't be happier with how my children are getting on at this school, academically, socially, emotionally and spiritually.'

Members of staff are proud to work at Ashby-de-la-Zouch Church of England Primary School. They enjoy the challenge of making every day 'a step to success' for the pupils in their care. Governors are committed to ensuring that the school continually strives to improve. They have a wide range of skills. They use these when working with you and your staff to ensure that the school meets its aim of having a culture of achievement that celebrates, challenges and nurtures the talents of all its children.

To build upon the strengths identified at the last inspection, you have: enhanced the role that middle leaders play in driving improvement; made very significant changes to the way staff teach reading, writing and mathematics; improved the quality of the information collected about pupils' learning and ensured that teachers use this effectively when planning lessons or additional help for individual pupils; and provided high-quality professional development opportunities to improve leadership and teaching skills and ensured that these opportunities have been used to good effect.

Pupils learn and play happily together. They are friendly and show respect towards visitors, staff and one another. They speak enthusiastically about their learning across the curriculum. They appreciate the varied and interesting educational activities that take place off-site, including those within the local community. A good example of the pupils' work in the local community is the 'Back in Time' film. The film records a project based at St Helen's Church. It demonstrates vividly how the pupils gained a deeper understanding of life in the past as they 'met' a pilgrim, a stonemason, a civil war soldier, a woman in the finger pillory and many other figures who lived in Ashby-de-la-Zouch in the past.

When the school was last inspected, leaders were asked to improve pupils' achievement, particularly in writing. The national system for assessing achievement at the end of key stages 1 and 2 has changed since that time. This makes it impossible to make direct comparisons of pupils' achievement. However, there is plenty of evidence that actions taken to improve teaching and learning have had a positive impact on pupils' progress and attainment. The proportion of pupils attaining the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6 is consistently above the national average.

The gains made since the previous inspection have not diminished your desire for further improvement. You are keen for more pupils to attain high standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Ensuring that teaching enables a greater proportion of pupils to make above average progress and so exceed the standards expected for their ages is a next step for the school.

The progress made by disadvantaged pupils through key stage 2 has varied considerably from year to year. Most disadvantaged pupils currently in the school are progressing well. However, a few disadvantaged pupils are not doing as well as they could. Meeting these pupils' individual needs more effectively is a further area for improvement.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team and governors ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. There are four designated safeguarding leads in the school. Pupils are confident that these, and other staff, will do everything necessary to keep them safe. Pupils value the information and guidance on staying safe that they get from visitors to the school. For example, during the inspection, pupils were benefiting from expert advice on water safety.

The school records carefully any concerns raised about a pupil's well-being, the actions taken and the outcome. Staff are alert to signs that pupils may have mental health problems or dietary disorders. Effective links with local agencies ensure that these, or other vulnerable pupils, receive prompt and appropriate support.

Staff and governors receive regular safeguarding training. They are up to date in their knowledge and understanding.

## Inspection findings

- Disadvantaged pupils' do not attain as highly as other pupils. Raising the attainment of this group is a priority in the school improvement plan. One strategy that is having particular success is the increased use of teaching staff, as well as teaching assistants, to deliver additional sessions for disadvantaged pupils. These sessions aim to help pupils master specific skills in reading, writing and mathematics. Teachers and senior leaders check closely the impact of any additional support provided. They know accurately which interventions help pupils the most and which are less effective. Overall, disadvantaged pupils are now making strong progress. The proportion who have the skills expected for their age is increasing in the large majority of year groups. However, there are a handful of pupils who are not catching up with their peers. Enabling these pupils to make better progress is a next step for the school.
- Since the last inspection, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year has increased year on year. In 2017, the proportion was above the national average. Reception staff have improved the accuracy of the assessments they make when children start school. This means that they know precisely each child's starting point. Staff ensure that each child receives the teaching and support required to enable them to make good progress.
- Reception staff recognise the key role that parents play in helping children get off to a good start to school. The partnership between school and home has been strengthened. Staff work particularly closely with parents of children who they judge will benefit most from regular meetings to review their child's progress. Staff give them ideas and resources to help them support their child's learning at home. This initiative is proving to be very beneficial to disadvantaged children. It is helping them to increase their skills in all areas of the early years curriculum.
- At the end of key stage 2 in 2017, pupils' progress was slower in reading than in writing and mathematics. The school has made improving pupils' reading progress a priority this year. To meet this aim, teachers:
  - encourage pupils to read more regularly through setting reading challenges and recommending books that they judge pupils will enjoy
  - check closely how regularly pupils read outside school
  - give more time in lessons to teaching pupils how to skim and scan a text for information
  - show pupils how to use contextual clues to work out the meaning of unfamiliar words.

Pupils are now making strong progress in reading. Their reading standards are in line with their writing and mathematics standards. In reading, as in the other subjects, your ambition is to increase still further the proportion of pupils throughout the school who have skills that exceed those expected for their ages.

- You responded effectively to the recommendation in the previous inspection to improve outcomes in writing. You have introduced a new approach to teaching

phonics. This is improving the pupils' early spelling skills. Key stage 1 teachers give high priority to the accurate use of punctuation. This is leading to an above average proportion of pupils attaining the expected standards in writing by the end of Year 2. In key stage 2, pupils understand how the choices they make about sentence structure and vocabulary are key to the quality of their writing. Pupils' standards in writing are consistently higher than the national averages by the end of Year 6.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- high-quality teaching enables a greater proportion of pupils to reach high standards in reading, writing and mathematics
- teaching, supported by the effective use of the pupil premium, meets more effectively the individual needs of disadvantaged pupils and so improves the progress of any pupils at risk of underachieving.

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

Yours sincerely

Anthony O'Malley  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During this inspection, I met with you, the deputy headteacher and other members of staff to discuss the school's effectiveness. I also had a discussion with three members of the governing body. I met with a group of older pupils to find out about their views of the school. I talked with other pupils as I met them around the school and in lessons. I observed teaching and learning throughout the school. I looked at work in pupils' books and heard five children read.

I considered numerous documents, including those linked to keeping pupils safe, the school's self-evaluation document and the school's improvement plan. I took into account the 41 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and the 26 written comments from parents, and I gathered the views of parents as they brought their children to school. I also considered the views of 21 members of staff who completed their online questionnaires.