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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
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4 April 2018

Mrs Sarah Bocking
Executive Headteacher
Brancaster Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School
Market Lane
Brancaster
King's Lynn
Norfolk
PE31 8AB

Dear Mrs Bocking

Short inspection of Brancaster Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 20 March 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 October 2013.

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 has been through a period of considerable change since the last inspection. You and the governors have managed this well. The local authority audit in September enabled you to rethink how you ensure that pupils make the most progress they can in key stage 2. For example, you have received effective support from a local headteacher and you have provided helpful training to support staff. Your swift and effective action has ensured that pupils in key stage 2 are currently making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics from their starting points. Consequently, you have successfully addressed the issues from the last inspection.

During the scrutiny of pupils' writing, staff identified that pupils' written English often reads like their spoken English. They acknowledge that improving pupils' use of Standard English is an area for improvement.

The review of governance that followed the audit provided useful pointers for improvement to the federated governing body. Consequently, governors are more effective in how they support and challenge Brancaster as well as having a more strategic overview of the federation.

Your staff are highly committed to the school. They found the local authority audit challenging. However, they acknowledge the rapid improvements they have made since this took place. For example, one staff member said: 'We've built a strong team. There's more rigour in monitoring and we're working together so there's more consistency. We've seen a lot of improvement in pupils' writing and presentation in their books.'

Pupils love their school and say that all the staff really care about them. One pupil said: 'Teachers are really nice and kind. I think it's a good school. If you've got special needs they get you what you need.' Pupils acknowledge that due to some pupils' special needs, behaviour can be challenging at times but 'the teachers sort out any problems and the smiley face charts work well.' You and the governors are reviewing the staffing structure to ensure that the needs of pupils whose behaviour can be challenging are met consistently.

Parents and carers speak very highly of the school. All six responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents, and all the parents I spoke to during the inspection were very positive about the good progress their children make and how effectively the school supports pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. One parent commented: 'The school has been a huge influence in our world and it is excellent for our children. The support and encouragement for the children is fantastic. Issues and requests are dealt with swiftly and professionally. The staff are clearly a team on the same page, with the children's progress in mind at all times. My children's learning preferences are known and built on.'

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding processes and procedures meet requirements. Staff have regular and effective training, so know what to do if a pupil raises a concern.

You keep detailed and useful records where you have concerns about a pupil, and provide effective support to families when needed. You work well with external support services to ensure that families receive the correct level of support. For example, you assiduously follow up referrals to the multi-agency safeguarding hub.

Pupils say that they feel safe at school. You ensure that pupils are greeted as they come in to school, are well supervised and play safely together at all breaktimes.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry was to check how you are improving pupils' attendance and reducing persistent absence. You and the deputy headteacher work effectively with the local authority attendance officer to discourage parents from taking holidays during term time. You are providing effective support to families who find it difficult to get their children to school on time every day. Consequently, attendance is improving for most pupils. You and the pupils are

reviewing rewards systems for good attendance on a regular basis, and a new system is almost ready to put in place. Pupils enjoy creating new approaches, and their involvement results in improved attendance.

- My second line of enquiry was focused on how you are improving pupils' progress in writing and mathematics in key stage 2. The recent period of changes in teacher in key stage 2 resulted in a decline in pupils' progress in 2017, and consequently the school did not meet the government's floor standards. You and the staff have worked determinedly to turn this around. When we scrutinised pupils' books, it was evident that all pupils in key stage 2 are making good progress from their starting points in writing and mathematics.
- You have taken on board points raised by the local authority audit. For example, teaching assistants have sharply focused performance targets and you have put in place a structured training programme to improve the support they give pupils in mathematics lessons. This is at an early stage of development and you acknowledge that training for teaching assistants remains an area for improvement.
- My third line of enquiry was about the teaching of systematic, synthetic phonics. You have a strong, well-structured teaching programme and phonic reading scheme. Teachers and teaching assistants are well trained in how to implement this approach. Consequently, all pupils, from Reception to Year 6, make good progress with learning to read and developing their reading skills. I read with beginner readers in Reception and a range of pupils who find learning to read difficult. All pupils make effective use of their phonic knowledge when reading unfamiliar words.
- My fourth line of enquiry was related to girls and boys achieving equally well by the end of their Reception Year in all the areas of learning. Equality of opportunity has been a key focus across the school over the last year. Consequently, staff are proactive in making sure that girls and boys have a go at all activities. For example, the children's learning journals have strong evidence of boys actively involved in cooking activities and girls in using a range of different tools to make objects. One example records a recent conversation where a girl went to the toolbox to use the tools. A boy said, 'They're for boys really.' The girl replied, 'That's not true. They are for girls as well, and girls can use them just as well as boys.'
- You actively discourage stereotyping. For example, in the Reception and key stage 1 class, pupils recently discussed whether only girls can wear pink. The boys in the class agreed that it was possible for them to wear pink if they chose to. Pupils in key stage 2 told me that 'everyone is treated the same' and that pupils understand and help each other, for example if 'they don't live with their own family.'
- My final line of enquiry was to check how you ensure that the additional funding you receive for disadvantaged pupils is used effectively. You have a clear plan of how you will use this funding every year and why you have chosen to use it in this way. You carefully evaluate the impact of this approach every term, and if an activity or intervention is no longer effective, you change your approach.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers strengthen their focus on teaching pupils to write in Standard English to further improve the quality of pupils' written work
- the structured training programme for teaching assistants is carefully evaluated and continues to have a positive impact on the support given for pupils' learning in mathematics
- the staffing structure is reviewed to ensure that pupils' behaviour is effectively managed in all key stage 2 lessons.

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

Julie Winyard
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I spoke with you, the mathematics subject leader, the governors, a representative from the local authority, the designated safeguarding leads, the staff, pupils and parents. We observed learning and teaching in all classes. I read with pupils at the early stages of learning to read in Reception, and less-able readers in key stage 2. I scrutinised a range of documents, including your self-evaluation and school improvement development plan. I scrutinised pupils' mathematics books and pupils' writing in English and other subjects with your key stage 1 and 2 teachers. I scrutinised a range of safeguarding documentation and a sample of pupil files. I scrutinised six responses to Parent View, the online questionnaire for parents, three responses to the online staff questionnaire and six responses to the online pupil questionnaire.