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Oliver Johnson  
Executive Headteacher  
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Dear Oliver Johnson

### **Short inspection of Culworth Church of England Primary Academy**

Following my visit to the school on 10 May 2016, 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in April 2013.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You took up post at Easter 2016 and have made a positive start in your role. You are quickly getting a clear view of the school and how it can be improved. The governors and leaders have managed the transition from the previous substantive headship well. They appointed an experienced headteacher in an interim capacity and secured additional support from the academy trust's school improvement partner to oversee teaching standards. This enabled them to review their evaluation of the school and ensure that the quality of teaching did not decline.

This is a caring and engaging school. Leaders and teachers provide pupils with a curriculum that interests them and that they enjoy. Behaviour is good and pupils are keen to learn. Communication between pupils and staff, and parents and staff, is good. Pupils told me that staff listen to them. For example, one girl told me how staff responded positively to her request for a football team. Parents told me that staff are accessible and friendly and are happy to do whatever is necessary to ensure that the pupils are happy at the school and make progress. One parent, typifying the views of others, described the school as 'great', adding, 'there is an open-door policy and parents are always welcome. The curriculum is so engaging it brings learning alive. Pupils love it. Behaviour is good the pupils learn about a value each term. Communication is great.'

Leaders and governors ensure that any weaknesses they identify are tackled effectively. However, governors have not ensured that they have fulfilled all of their statutory duties. In particular, they have not evaluated the impact on pupils' outcomes of funding provided through the pupil premium or the PE and sports premium. While, currently, there are no children on roll who are looked after by the local authority, governors have not implemented the statutory guidance with regard to children looked after.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You and your staff keep pupils safe. Leaders have ensured that the appropriate checks have been made on staff and, where necessary, volunteers, so that pupils are not put at risk. The single central record of staff meets requirements. The designated leaders for safeguarding have both received appropriate, up-to-date training and have also ensured that other staff have had the training they need. They have reviewed the school's safeguarding policy to ensure it meets the most recent requirements, including the duty to protect pupils from the dangers associated with extremism and radicalisation. However, the school's website does not include the most recent version of this policy.

All the parents I spoke with or who completed Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, agreed that their children feel safe and are happy at the school. Pupils I met during my visit also told me that they feel safe at Culworth. They shared with me all the ways that school staff keep them safe and teach them how to stay safe. Pupils say that teachers help them know about the risks they face and how to protect themselves from the potential dangers of using the internet, or from strangers. They also appreciate the opportunity to learn to swim and ride their bikes safely.

### **Inspection findings**

- Leaders and governors have acted promptly to address the areas that they need to improve. They are supported in this by a school improvement partner from the multi-academy trust who provides effective support and challenge to school leaders. Leaders and governors recognise that pupils did not make sufficient progress in mathematics in 2015. They have taken action to address this, including through the provision of additional resources, additional training for teachers and increased curriculum time for mathematics. They have also employed additional specialist mathematics teachers, part time, to work with the most-able pupils. As a result, pupils are now making stronger progress.
- Leaders and teachers track pupils' progress regularly and rigorously. They identify those pupils who have fallen behind and intervene to ensure that they catch up. Those pupils who need additional support access it via an effective school provision map and as a result are making stronger progress.
- The school's performance information and the sample of mathematics books I scrutinised during the inspection show that pupils are currently making

stronger progress than in 2015. However, there are still fewer pupils on track to reach age-related expectations in mathematics compared to reading and writing.

- Leaders have introduced the revised national curriculum effectively. Parents and pupils appreciate the creative approach to the curriculum taken by the school and particularly value the opportunity pupils have to learn about themes, such as Ancient Greeks, as a whole school.
- Leaders have worked with colleagues across the South Northamptonshire Church of England Multi-Academy Trust to implement an effective assessment system that supports the revised curriculum. They have ensured that teachers have been trained and supported. Leaders have also ensured that teachers' assessments have been moderated across the multi-academy trust and the local collaborative trust of primary schools in the Chenderit cluster.
- Middle leaders, including the English and mathematics leaders, work across both of the federated academies. This arrangement is working effectively and the middle leaders carry out their roles well.
- Teachers use information about pupils well to ensure that expectations of what they can achieve are sufficiently high. Evidence from the sample of teachers' plans I looked at, together with our visits to classrooms, showed that teachers are using their knowledge of pupils' needs and abilities well to plan work that is helping pupils to make stronger progress.
- Pupils have target sheets in their writing and mathematics books that inform them and the adults that teach them what they need to learn next. Pupils like these target sheets but say that they do not always have enough time to use them effectively.
- We observed teachers questioning pupils effectively; from the open-ended 'what do you think?' questions, to precise questions to check pupils' understanding. We also saw good learning behaviour in the classes, with attentive pupils listening carefully to the adults and contributing confidently and articulately to discussions.
- In 2015, attainment at the end of key stage 2 was above the national average in each subject and all pupils achieved at least Level 4 in reading and mathematics. Attainment at key stage 1 was in line with the national average in reading and writing but below in mathematics.
- School performance information for current pupils, including the most able, shows that pupils are making strong progress in reading, writing and mathematics and that the proportion making accelerated progress has improved. As a result, most Year 2 and Year 6 pupils are on track to reach age-related expectations in reading, writing and mathematics.
- In 2015, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development in the early years was in line with the national average. School performance information indicates that most children currently in the early years are likely to achieve a good level of development by the end of the academic year.
- The early years' environment provides good opportunities for pupils to learn independently. Outside there are a variety of opportunities for pupils to write, for example using big chalk to write on the floor or by visiting the writing hut. Pupils learn cooperatively together using a variety of resources including construction equipment and by playing in the mud kitchen. Adults provide

support or a prompt when necessary but also stand back and observe pupils finding their own way. Adults know the children well and this helps them to direct the children in their learning. As in the main school, adults make good use of questioning to support children's progress.

- Leaders and governors have worked well with parents to ensure pupils attend school regularly. They have clarified the school's expectations and ensured that parents make an annual commitment, via the home-school agreement, that their children will regularly attend the school. Leaders and governors have also revised the process parents follow to request a holiday be authorised. You and the chair of governors now consider all applications and authorisation is only granted if the request meets the criteria. Currently, attendance at the school is 96.3% and the school has no pupils who are persistently absent.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- standards in mathematics improve so that pupils' attainment is in line with that in reading and writing
- they fulfil their statutory duties with regard to:
  - the school website, including the evaluation of pupil premium funding and the evaluation of PE and sports funding
  - the education of children looked after.

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

Yours sincerely

Derek Myers  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with you, your two deputy headteachers, the English and mathematics leads, the business manager, the pastoral lead, the chair of the governing body, the vice-chair of the governing body and the school improvement partner. I also met with members of staff and took account of the responses to the staff survey. We discussed your current school self-evaluation and your improvement plan. I reviewed both of them. You and I visited classrooms and learning areas to observe teaching, talk to pupils and look at their work. I evaluated information about pupils' progress, attendance and exclusion. I observed and talked with pupils in their classes and met with six pupils. I met with you and the

designated safeguarding lead and reviewed your systems, processes and records relating to safeguarding. We looked at work from a sample of pupils. I met with a number of parents at the beginning of the school day and considered their views alongside the responses from Parent View. I spoke with a representative of the trust. I also reviewed the school's website and how effectively the pupil premium grant and PE and sport funding are used.