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Mr Adam Breakwell
Executive Headteacher
Kimbolton St James CofE Primary School
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Dear Mr Breakwell

Short inspection of Kimbolton St James CofE Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 6 June 2017, 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 July 2013.

This school continues to be good.

Along with other school leaders, you have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. There have been many changes at the school over the last two years. In April 2015, you joined the school as executive headteacher, in a federation with a local school, and you appointed a head of school in September 2016. Despite the relatively short time you have been in school, you have secured the confidence of governors, staff, parents and pupils alike. All staff who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire are proud to be part of Kimbolton St James CofE Primary School. They agree that the school has a culture that is aspirational for all pupils and many comment on the improved communication, openness and 'team ethos' across the school. Parents are supportive and the great majority would recommend the school to others. As one parent said: 'This school has given my children the best start I could ever have hoped for.'

You have high expectations of staff and these, in turn, are passed on to the pupils. You have introduced many new approaches to further improve outcomes for pupils. For example, you have introduced regular meetings to review the progress of all pupils and tracking systems to help teachers and leaders identify and support pupils' needs more effectively. These approaches now need time to embed to ensure that they are used consistently across the school.

The classrooms are bright and welcoming, and displays around the school support learning in a wide variety of subjects and celebrate pupils' achievements. Staff training has improved the quality of teaching across the school. Your staff also

benefit from working closely with other schools to share best practice. Evidence seen during the inspection supports your view that the majority of pupils are making secure progress across all year groups in reading, writing and mathematics.

The pupils are well behaved and good ambassadors for the school. Older pupils speak positively about how the teachers help them to improve their work. They value the trips and range of extra-curricular activities that they can access, and the opportunities they have to take on additional responsibilities. The pupils also talk about the significance of the school motto, 'Treat others as you would like to be treated', and the importance of equality and having respect for others.

At the previous inspection, the school was asked to provide pupils with more opportunities to work independently, to improve their writing and to develop their problem-solving skills in mathematics. You have successfully addressed each of these aspects. For example, we saw pupils in class 1 writing about the properties of materials to support their science work. In class 2, groups of pupils worked collaboratively to identify tasks that could be completed in a second, a minute or an hour. In class 3, pupils were tackling real-life problems, such as working out how much their shopping would cost and how much change they should receive. In class 4, pupils were fully engaged in a project to design and cost a home decorating project. Pupils comment that they like being 'challenged' in lessons and that this helps to make learning fun.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a clear culture of safeguarding within the school. You and your leadership team have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of a high quality. As a result, pupils are well cared for at all times. Pupils say that they feel safe in school and that they are taught how to stay safe, for example when using the internet or crossing the road.

All staff have regular and appropriate training to understand their responsibilities in keeping pupils safe. Staff are clear about what they should do if they have any concerns. You are persistent when there are concerns about a pupil's welfare, and work with external agencies as necessary. You and your governors have a good understanding of the specific safeguarding concerns that relate to the context of the school. Governors understand their role in overseeing the effectiveness of safeguarding.

Inspection findings

- Changes to leadership since the last inspection have brought greater stability to the school and have resulted in improved outcomes across all year groups. New systems are helping senior leaders and teachers to review pupils' progress more accurately and address any gaps in pupils' understanding. You have tightened up processes linked to the performance of staff, ensuring that everyone is clear about your expectations. Improvements in teaching, including more investigative and creative approaches to learning, have resulted in better quality provision for

all pupils including the most able.

- You effectively address the needs of the small number of disadvantaged pupils in school through individual plans which tackle each pupil's specific barriers to learning. You use the pupil premium funding well to provide additional in-class support or small group sessions, access to extra-curricular activities and counselling to support social and emotional needs. You are increasingly tracking the impact of any input to ensure that it is helping the pupils to make good progress.
- At the end of Reception Year, the proportion of children attaining the expected standard has improved considerably over the last three years. This is because of improved teaching, a better understanding of the revised standards and a greater focus on addressing the needs of individual children. Communication with parents has also improved, for example, through regular newsletters and home-school books.
- You and your head of school clearly understand the strengths and weaknesses across the school. You are passionate about, and demonstrate a drive for, making continual improvements. You are planning further changes from September 2017. These include strengthening the head of school role and creating a fourth full-time class. This is possible because pupil numbers are increasing. You have also been instrumental in raising funds for a much-needed school hall. Building work for this project is due to start soon. These changes, along with the others you have introduced, will need time to embed to impact fully on pupils' progress.
- Over the last 12 months, you and your staff have been developing your whole-school curriculum. This includes a topic-based approach which helps pupils to make links between subjects and with real life, for example, by providing a context and purpose for writing. You have focused on developing teachers and teaching assistants' skills in questioning. Pupils are now regularly asked 'why?' or 'how do you know?' to help them develop their understanding and reasoning skills. Provision for music and physical education is now stronger. As the structure of classes will change in September, you have further work planned to introduce a two-year curriculum for all classes. This will be unique to your school and the needs of your pupils.
- You and governors are aware that the school website does not fully comply with statutory requirements. A new school website is currently being developed which will address these shortfalls.
- Pupils' attendance improved in 2016 and attendance rates were higher than the national average. However, the attendance for pupils who have free school meals was in the lowest 10% nationally. Attendance information for the current school year shows that overall attendance is a little below last year and attendance for pupils who have free school meals is not improving. You track the attendance of individual pupils carefully, contact parents when attendance drops below 95% and offer practical support to help pupils get to school on time. However, you are aware of the need to do more to maximise pupils' attendance. The procedures you and your staff follow, including contacting parents on the first day of absence and working with the local authority, help to ensure that pupils are safe and not

at risk of going missing from education.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- new leadership and management structures and systems, including those for assessing and tracking pupils' progress, are embedded across the school
- a bespoke, diverse and exciting curriculum is further developed so that all pupils are given a breadth of opportunities and are able to make good progress across a wide range of subjects
- high levels of attendance are maintained for the majority of pupils and improved for vulnerable pupils, especially those eligible for free school meals.

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

Yours sincerely

Catherine Crooks
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection I met with you and your head of school. I met with the chair and vice-chair of governors and I spoke to the school's external adviser and a representative from the local authority by telephone. I talked with parents at the start of the day and with pupils both formally and informally.

Together we visited all classes where we observed teaching and learning, spoke to pupils and looked at the work in some books. I observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around school. I scrutinised several documents including your school self-evaluation and documents relating to safeguarding.

I took account of 16 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, 10 comments received electronically and three hand-delivered letters. I also took account of 10 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and one response to the pupil questionnaire.