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Mrs Marina Breeze
Headteacher
Little Munden Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School
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Dear Mrs Marina Breeze

Short inspection of Little Munden Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 13 December 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 February 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You, the staff and governors have accurately evaluated the quality of education provided at the school and have addressed all the issues from the previous inspection. You and the deputy headteacher have successfully built a strong team of teachers and support staff. Everyone works together to ensure that pupils get the best possible education.

Pupils love their school. At the whole-school school council meeting held during the inspection, 100% of pupils indicated that they would recommend their school to other pupils. One pupil commented, 'We have the best teachers in the world! They give us lots of confidence to help us get better.' Another pupil said, 'Our school is nice because everyone is full of joy!' Pupils really appreciate the opportunity to choose the level of difficulty of their work in lessons: 'Teachers make learning fun. It's not just, "You're doing maths today, here's your sheet!"' Every group in the school council commented on how much they enjoy learning. This was evident when we visited classes and saw pupils getting on with their work and making an effort to do their best. Pupils are also very enthusiastic about the 'Munden Mile'. Pupils said this daily exercise has improved their fitness.

You, the staff and governors take your church foundation very seriously and this is a key feature of the school. Consequently, you have developed very strong links

with the local church. Pupils have taken on board your school values, which are closely linked to fundamental British values. Pupils are polite and kind to each other and to the adults they work with.

Parents speak very highly of the school. All of the 18 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, were positive about every aspect of the school. All of those parents who responded would recommend the school to other parents. I spoke to a number of parents on the playground who are very pleased with how quickly their children settle into school and how well they are getting on. One parent commented: 'If she's happy, I'm happy. She's come a long way with her reading. She's doing really well here.' I also received an email from a parent who was full of praise for this 'super school' – in particular the very warm welcome she receives from you and the staff as well as with the good progress her child is making.

The staff talked very positively about your leadership and know the strengths of the school and the areas that need further improvement. One teacher said: 'The headteacher is always accessible. She's very hands-on and she's calm. She makes sure she doesn't have a stressed staff.' Consequently, staff morale is high because teachers and support staff feel that they are valued. One commented, 'The headteacher is very good at finding people's strengths and developing them.' Staff said that the training they receive helps them to improve their work.

Although your self-evaluation is accurate and has robust evidence to support your judgements, the areas you identify for improvement do not appear in the school development plan. You are in the process of rewriting this document.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding processes and procedures are fit for purpose. Staff have regular training in how to ensure that pupils are safe and stay safe. For example, in staff meetings, you regularly present possible safeguarding scenarios and staff discuss how they would respond if this happened. You and the designated safeguarding lead are tenacious in following up any concerns you have with children's social care. You keep careful track of every contact and keep telephoning until action is taken to ensure that children are safe.

Pupils said that behaviour is typically good in class and on the playground. Pupils understand that some pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities have difficulty behaving appropriately at times. Pupils said incidents of poor behaviour are rare and staff sort these out very quickly. Two of the four respondents to the pupil questionnaire said that there are occasional incidents of bullying but staff immediately deal with these and there are no further problems.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry was how you ensure that pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are rapidly and accurately identified and provision enables them to make the best progress from their starting points.

- You have a high proportion of pupils receiving school support because the SEN coordinator (SENCo) is exceptionally effective in identifying and making appropriate provision to support pupils' individual special needs. For example, at your half-termly staff meetings, you discuss the progress that pupils are making and whether any pupils are falling behind and why this is the case.
- The SENCo makes sure that staff have appropriate training. For example, all staff have received training from a local special school about how to manage difficult behaviour and autism. The SENCo works with teachers, parents and pupils to ensure that pupils have sharply focused learning and behaviour targets. These are evaluated daily by the teaching assistant working with the pupil and adjustments made if needed. The SENCo keeps a very careful watch on how pupils are getting on and gives further advice and support where required. As a result, pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make consistently good progress from their starting points.
- My second line of enquiry was focused on pupil outcomes, which vary considerably from one year to the next due to the very small numbers of pupils in each year group. I wanted to check whether pupils are making good progress even though the outcomes data, particularly for Year 6 in 2017, did not meet national expectations.
- Two years ago, you introduced an approach in all lessons of allowing pupils to choose the level of the learning task they would work on. Your purpose was to address the issue about giving sufficient challenge to the most able pupils from the last inspection. This initiative has had a good impact on all pupils as well as the most able. When we looked at a range of pupils' work across the school, it was clear that pupils are challenging themselves at the right level. They are not choosing work that is too easy or too difficult. If they are tempted to make the wrong choice, teachers guide them to the right choice.
- The impact of this approach is that all pupils are making good progress from their starting points. Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities find choosing tasks highly motivating. They are no longer afraid to 'have a go' at new work and do not rely on adults helping them to complete tasks.
- During our learning walk, we saw that pupils are absorbed in their work because they enjoy learning. When we looked through pupils' books, we saw that pupils are correcting and improving their work and that their spelling has improved, an issue from the last inspection, but presentation is not consistently neat and careful in handwriting or in writing numbers. This is an area for further improvement.
- My third line of enquiry was about how rapidly you identify any barriers that pupils have to learning phonics and how you deal with these. During our learning walk, we observed effective and systematic phonics teaching from teachers and support staff. Pupils learn to read rapidly because of this effective teaching. In 2017, a small group of pupils did not reach the national standard in the phonics check. This was due to their SEN. This group of pupils is now in Year 2 and are making good progress in learning to read.
- My fourth line of enquiry was about the curriculum in the early years and whether this enables children, in particular boys, to develop their listening and attention, manage their feelings and behaviour, make relationships and be

imaginative. These aspects of learning and development were below average in 2016. The early years leader made good provision for this group of boys during their time in the early years class. For example, staff showed children how to play appropriately with the activities set out for them. Current assessment information indicates that all children are on track to achieve the early learning goals in these aspects of their development.

- The early years curriculum is broad and carefully designed and caters for the interests of boys and girls. The early years leader and her staff make detailed observations of what interests the children and make sure that these interests are included in their planning. Effective use is made of the outside area during lessons, another issue from the last inspection that has been successfully addressed. The early years leader and I scrutinised the children's learning journeys, which are an effective record of the good progress that children make over time. It was clear from children's written work that they do not have regular opportunities to practise accurately forming letters and numbers. This has an impact on their presentation in Year 1, which is not consistently tidy.
- My final line of enquiry was about how effective the school is in raising attendance and reducing persistent absence. You are doing everything you can to ensure that pupils arrive at school on time and attend school every day. Your effective actions have raised attendance so it is in line with national levels and last year there were no persistent absentees. This term, pupils have been away from school due to illness but current attendance is still in line with the national average.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the school development plan includes the priorities for improvement identified in the school's self-evaluation
- pupils regularly practise accurate letter and number formation and that presentation in pupils' books meets the school's required high standard.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of St Albans, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Hertfordshire. 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 to you, the governors, your school improvement partner, representatives from the local authority and Diocese of St Albans, leaders

for the early years, SEN and the designated safeguarding lead, the staff, pupils and parents. We observed learning and teaching in all classes, including phonics and writing. I scrutinised a range of documents, including your self-evaluation and school development plan. I scrutinised a range of pupils' books in lessons. I had a meeting with a group of most able pupils and looked at their books with them. I scrutinised a range of safeguarding documentation and a sample of pupil files. I analysed Parent View, the online questionnaire for parents, and the online staff and pupil questionnaires.