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Mrs Tracey Gill  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Gill

### **Short inspection of Denby Free CofE VA Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 1 February 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 September 2013.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Your school is a happy, vibrant and positive place of learning where pupils make consistently good progress. Classrooms are calm and purposeful spaces where pupils work hard, listen to others, and do their best. Pupils complete their exercise books to a high standard, neatly and proudly. Staff who responded to Ofsted's questionnaire unanimously feel respected and motivated, and that you treat them fairly.

You, staff and the governing body are mindful not to focus excessively on English and mathematics. The curriculum is wide and interesting and, as a result, pupils say that they enjoy learning greatly. Children in the Reception class were keen to tell me how much they liked their lessons, and that everyone is 'best friends'. Pupils learn about exciting things, such as both African animals and sea creatures in key stage 1, and the Egyptians in key stage 2. There are many opportunities for pupils to develop their creativity in areas such as art and design, drama and music. Pupils were keen to show me, for example, how they had used recycled materials to make crowns to celebrate Epiphany, and how they had learned about, and made, African music. Pupils say that teachers make learning fun and, as a result, they want to come to school. Their attendance over time remains consistently above the national average.

Staff model behaviour that reflects the school's values. They are calm, caring, positive and polite. Pupils see that staff listen to and respect them and, as a result, pupils become reflective, happy and cooperative themselves. Pupils are taught how to give themselves appropriate levels of challenge; staff teach them to 'stick at it', even if they get something wrong the first time. One pupil summed up the approach of others by saying that, despite finding mathematics the most difficult subject, it was his favourite. Pupils' positive attitudes to learning, combined with their good achievement, mean that they are well prepared for secondary school.

You have attended effectively to the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. For example, pupils' work across different year groups shows convincingly that teachers now give them frequent and ample opportunities to solve mathematical problems and to undertake practical challenges. Teachers also plan many occasions where pupils need to use their mathematics skills across the curriculum. For example, pupils in Year 1 measure their handspan and foot length, as part of their science work on the body. In geography, pupils in Year 2 record the temperature each day, and learn about directions through their map work regarding Columbus' voyages. Pupils also told me how much they enjoyed 'Enterprise Week', and how each class has to raise money for their class by devising and implementing a project. I saw compelling artwork, photographic evidence and mathematical exercises for pupils in Years 4 and 5, who had designed and made clothes for a Second World War fashion show.

Teachers give the most able pupils, like other groups, work that challenges them. Teachers monitor the progress of all pupils carefully, and use it to plan tasks that meet their needs. Pupils' progress is improving further because you are now meeting with each teacher each half term to discuss this with them. Teachers are held quickly to account for any pupils who are falling behind. As a result, the governing body is then able to ask you challenging questions on pupils' performance. This is because you can pass on to them good levels of information about how different groups are performing across different subjects. You and the governing body have correctly judged your school to be a good one. You have written an effective action plan to attend to a number of areas, such as improving pupils' ability to spell, and to infer meaning when they read. You ensure that the judgements teachers make about what pupils can do or know are accurate by discussing pupils' work with colleagues in other schools and with the adviser from the local authority.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Staff are vigilant for any sign that a pupil could be being harmed. They have a good awareness of these indicators because they receive regular training in safeguarding, including in areas such as extremism. They pass their concerns on to you and, in turn, you do not hesitate to make a referral to social care if this is needed. Records of vulnerable pupils show that you seek the assistance and support of a wide range of agencies to help them. Pupils who are anxious, have low self-esteem or other relevant emotional and behavioural needs are given time, space and support to

express their thoughts, and to learn to manage their own behaviour more effectively. Staff give the oldest pupils weekly mindfulness training, including breathing exercises, so that they can learn to relax, and not to worry unduly about things. Pupils I met told me that they found this very valuable. Those who already felt calm appreciated that they may be able to use this skill if needed when they became older.

A very large majority of parents would recommend the school to others. However, a handful of parents who responded to Parent View expressed their concerns about the behaviour of a very small minority of pupils. Nevertheless, the many pupils I spoke with were clear that there was little bullying and name-calling in school. When misbehaviour or unkindness does happen, they told me how teachers sort it out fairly and quickly. They were also clear that they could always approach members of staff if they were concerned about something. They explained that they and their peers, along with their younger siblings, felt safe in school.

You and your staff teach pupils well about a range of different risks, such as water, electricity and strangers. Pupils also take part in a scheme to teach them how to cycle safely on the road. In addition, pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe online. They know that they must immediately show to an adult they trust any evidence of an unsuitable message or image on a computer, tablet or mobile phone, and never to give their personal details to someone they do not know personally.

## **Inspection findings**

- My key lines of enquiry were to investigate the achievement of pupils currently in the school, including those pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. I also looked at the school's provision for developing pupils' creative skills in aspects such as drama, art and design, and music.
- Children enter the school in the Reception Year with levels of skills that are variable. Regardless, they get off to a good start. The proportion who achieve a good level of development at the end of the year is consistently higher than the national average.
- The proportions of pupils who go on to achieve the expected standard, and those who demonstrate a greater depth of understanding, is at least in line with, and often higher than, the national average at both key stages 1 and 2. Pupils' progress, including the disadvantaged pupils, is also at least in line with the national average.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress from their starting points. This is because staff know them well, give them work that is appropriate for their ability, and support them effectively so they improve. Your expectations for the attainment of these pupils are high, and a good proportion of these pupils achieve high standards.
- Pupils' phonics skills are very well developed. The proportion of those passing the phonics screening check in Year 1 is consistently above the national average. However, you have noted that although pupils' ability to decode words is secure,

not enough teachers give them opportunities to develop their skills in inference. As a result, pupils are not highly proficient in drawing conclusions where the text does not state things explicitly. Staff are to receive training on this very shortly, so they can improve their teaching of this aspect.

- Although pupils across the school make good progress in their writing, you have judged correctly that pupils' spelling is not as good as it could be. You explained to me how, although pupils spell words accurately in isolation, they sometimes do not apply these spellings when writing. You are already considering a range of approaches to attend to this.
- Teachers develop well pupils' creative talents and skills, and pupils' work reflects this. Pupils showed me proudly how they had made intricate and unique snowflakes to show the wonder of nature, and I saw striking charcoal sketches of evacuees as part of their work on the Second World War. Pupils in Years 3 and 4, for instance, learn about drama through Shakespeare and perform 'A Midsummer Night's Dream'. They also learn samba drumming and, for example, perform for visitors and parents at the Denby Pottery factory.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils are more adept in inferring meaning from the texts they read
- teachers ensure that pupils consistently apply their spelling skills to their writing.

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

Yours sincerely

Roary Pownall  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met you and shared my lines of enquiry. I also met with members of the governing body, the assistant headteacher, and the subject leaders for English and mathematics, along with the subject leader for art and design. I considered the responses of parents to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and all free-text comments, along with the school's most recent questionnaire for parents. I scrutinised the responses to Ofsted's questionnaires for staff and pupils. We visited all classes together. I looked at samples of pupils' work. I observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and met with a large group of them at breaktime. I viewed a range of documents, including leaders' evaluation of the school's current

performance and its plans for further improvement. I considered a number of policy documents, including those for safeguarding, and investigated the procedure for reporting accidents. I examined the school's website to check that it meets requirements on the publication of specified information.