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Miss Philippa Boulding
Headteacher
Aberford Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School
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Dear Miss Boulding

Short inspection of Aberford Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 18 September 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 May 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Following the last inspection, you accurately identified and prioritised the areas for improvement. Along with governors, you took decisive actions to tackle weak teaching. As a result, the school experienced some turbulence in staffing, especially in the early years provision and key stage 1. Governors have since made strong appointments in these areas. As a result, leadership and management, and teaching and learning, have been strengthened.

Governance is a strength of the school. Since the last inspection, there have been some changes in the membership of the governing body, to strengthen the range of knowledge and expertise available. The chair of the governing body leads the governing body well. Governors have a wide range of skills. They are proud of and passionate about their school and are routinely involved in school life. Governors provide robust challenge and support to leaders and know the strengths and weaknesses of the school well.

School leaders have clear vision, determination and commitment to continuous school improvement. One of the strengths of the school is the ethos based on teamwork. School leaders and staff put children and pupils at the heart of what they do. Staff focus not only on the progress of pupils, but also on their whole school experience. As a result, outcomes of pupils have been strong overall since the last inspection.

You and your leadership team have successfully dealt with the areas for improvement identified in the last inspection report. At the last inspection, the school was asked to improve the quality of teaching, and thereby increase the progress that all pupils make, especially in key stage 1. Leaders were asked to ensure that: the best use of time is made in lessons; teachers have opportunities to observe and learn from best practice; and that pupils are aware of their long-term learning aims. You quickly raised staff expectations about the quality of teaching and learning. Leaders have focused strongly on staff professional development and mentoring. Staff have ongoing opportunities to observe best practice, not only within your school but also through effective collaborations with other schools. School leaders evaluate the impact of their actions through frequent monitoring of teaching and learning. As a result, the quality of teaching and learning has improved and the outcomes of pupils at the end of key stage 1 have improved year on year.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your staff have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that records are detailed. There is a strong safeguarding culture in the school. Weekly safeguarding meetings and updates mean that staff know the pupils well and know what to do if they have any concerns. The monitoring of pupils' welfare is comprehensive. As the designated safeguarding lead, you ensure that you carry out appropriate checks on the suitability of all staff. Your safeguarding governor, who is also due to be confirmed as the new chair of the governing body, monitors all areas of safeguarding thoroughly.

All staff and governors receive appropriate and up-to-date training in child protection. Staff are vigilant and report all concerns raised about pupils. As a result, the school shares information with external agencies effectively, leaders act quickly and follow up the impact of their actions closely.

Pupils say that they feel safe in school and know who to go to if they have any worries. During the inspection, pupils could articulate clearly what they must do to stay safe online. They also report that bullying is very rare and when it does happen, teachers deal with it effectively. Inspection evidence and the views of parents and staff also support this view. Pupils are polite, play well with each other and are respectful to each other and to staff. The vast majority of parents are very supportive of the school. Some parents describe their children as 'skipping into school every day and enjoying their learning'. The relationships between staff and pupils are very positive. As a result, behaviour in lessons and conduct around the school environment are exemplary.

Inspection findings

- Since the last inspection, school leaders have taken robust action to eradicate weak teaching. As a result, the school experienced instability in staffing in the early years provision and key stage 1. Leaders work closely with the local authority and other schools to ensure that their assessments are accurate and reliable. The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics has been improving year on year over the last three

years. However, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standards in reading and writing in 2018 was just below national average. A small number of pupils had a disproportionate impact on these unvalidated results. Unvalidated assessment information also indicates that in 2018 the proportion of pupils achieving standards at greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 1 was above national average. The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics combined has been improving over time and in 2018 was slightly above national average.

- Governors provide strong challenge to school leaders around the spending of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils. Since the last inspection, leaders have continued to raise the profile of disadvantaged pupils across the school. Pupils receive personalised support in improving confidence and resilience. Inspection evidence, school assessment information and scrutiny of pupils' work indicate that although there is some improvement in the outcomes of the disadvantaged pupils in the school, the gap between these pupils and their peers is not diminishing rapidly enough. While attainment falls below national average, the progress of most disadvantaged pupils from their starting points is strong. You are aware that more work is needed in this area and together with your staff you have already reviewed and adapted some of the strategies to focus more on academic achievement.
- Since the last inspection, leaders have refined and improved assessment systems in the school. You have increased accountability and raised expectations of what pupils can achieve, through regular pupil progress meetings. As a result, the attainment of pupils at the end of Year 6 has remained strong overall. Unvalidated results for 2018 indicate that there has been sustained improvement in pupils' progress in reading and writing. The same unvalidated assessment information indicates that the proportions of pupils achieving the expected and higher standards in reading and writing are above national averages. Although you were disappointed with the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics combined at the end of key stage 2, it remains above national average. A very small number of pupils had a disproportionate impact on the school results for mathematics. You agreed with me that there is more work to be done by leaders here to ensure that outcomes in mathematics improve further.
- Following the findings of the last inspection, you raised the expectations of the quality of teaching and learning across the whole school. You focused on providing opportunities for staff to learn from best practice, through both peer observations and links with other schools. Staff have received appropriate training to improve their practice. School leaders have strengthened the monitoring systems, which show that the quality of teaching is good and better in the vast majority of lessons. Leaders reviewed the school's assessment policy. As a result, pupils show pride in their books, know what their learning aims are and what they need to do to achieve their targets. In some lessons and books, there is variability in the level of challenge for the most able pupils, including in mathematics. Inspection evidence, our joint visits to lessons and scrutiny of pupils' books confirm this.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the attainment and progress of all pupils in mathematics at the end of key stage 2 continues to improve
- teachers consistently provide appropriate challenge that meets the needs of all pupils, including the most able pupils
- the gap in progress between disadvantaged pupils and their peers, at the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2, continues to diminish.

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

Yours sincerely

Dimitris Spiliotis
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and your assistant headteacher, staff and governors. I also held discussions with the local authority school improvement adviser and a representative from the Diocese of York. I spoke to a range of pupils and parents. I listened to pupils read and, together, we conducted tours of the school and lessons, looking at pupils' work and observing their learning. I also conducted a scrutiny of pupils' work in a range of subjects with senior leaders. I scrutinised and evaluated a range of documents relating to safeguarding, assessment, behaviour, attendance, parental views, and school improvement. I took account of the 34 extended responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the nine responses to the staff questionnaire.