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21 March 2019

Mrs Janice Dix
Headteacher
Fairhaven Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School
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Dear Mrs Dix

Short inspection of Fairhaven Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 5 March 2019, 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 school was judged to be good in June 2015.

This school continues to be good.

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

You and your deputy headteacher have successfully created a culture of shared leadership, where teachers and support staff know pupils well, and are dedicated to doing their best for them. Leaders have a detailed and realistic understanding of the strengths and challenges of your school and their evaluation of the school is accurate. Where leaders have identified any necessary improvements, actions are effective. For example, staff have reflected on the need to improve the quality of pupils' writing, and have introduced changes to the way that writing is taught that are beginning to have a positive effect.

Leaders have maintained the school's caring ethos, where each child is valued as an individual, and where staff work closely together in every child's best interest. As a consequence of this, pupils feel safe and happy in school, and their attendance remains high. Parents and carers speak very highly of the school, both for the quality of teaching and its nurturing environment. In particular, one parent commented, 'They go above and beyond to help the children grow in so many ways'.

Leaders are rightly proud of the richness of your curriculum, where pupils enjoy a broad range of learning activities, well supported by trips and a variety of visitors.

You ensure that pupils know about their local environment, but also that their horizons are expanded with visits further afield.

Governors visit the school regularly, listening to staff and pupils in order to have a full understanding of the strengths and challenges of the school. They fully share and promote the caring ethos of high expectations that leaders and staff have created and maintained in the school. This means that they enjoy celebrating pupils' successes, while also holding leaders to account for the standards that pupils achieve.

During the course of the inspection, the strong commitment of your staff to provide rigorous learning opportunities for pupils in a calm and orderly environment was clearly evident. Pupils enjoy learning, and take it very seriously. Pupils speak with understanding about their learning, with most of those that I spoke to able to explain what they need to do to meet their teachers' expectations. While these expectations are generally high, in some cases most-able pupils were not always given precise guidance on how to do their very best.

There are lots of examples of inspiring learning for pupils in their exercise books, and many instances of pupils making good progress since September, particularly in the quality of their writing. In a few instances, however, some most-able pupils' work was not yet as sophisticated as you and your staff would like it to be.

Pupils behave very well in school. In class, pupils listen closely to their teachers, and follow their instructions. When given a task, pupils engage with it immediately and remain focused. Pupils are friendly and polite around school, and easily develop mutually respectful relationships with each other and with members of staff. As a consequence, results of Ofsted's online questionnaire for pupils show that almost all of those who responded are happy at school and enjoy learning.

The vast majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire were positive about the school. They spoke highly not only of the quality of education that their children receive, but also of how happy their children are because of its friendly and caring atmosphere. One parent described it as a 'well-run and happy village school'.

Leaders have ensured that the school has an accurate internal assessment system that enables leaders and teachers to know how much progress each pupil is making in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Teachers use this effectively to intervene if a pupil falls below age-related expectations in these subjects. Assessment in other subjects is not so well developed.

Safeguarding is effective.

The designated safeguarding lead, supported by two deputy safeguarding leads, make sure that all staff and volunteers are knowledgeable about how to protect children from abuse and keep them safe. Staff know what to do if they are worried about a child and know what to do if a concern is identified. Safe recruitment

procedures are securely in place, and the single central record keeps an accurate record of pre-appointment checks carried out on staff and volunteers. Records are kept up to date where necessary, and you and your deputies work closely with outside agencies in the best interests of children and their families.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry investigated how leaders ensure that most-able pupils make the best possible progress in key stage 2 across the whole curriculum. Accurate assessment of the core subjects of English, mathematics and science means that teachers know who the most-able pupils are in their classes. It also means that teachers know how much progress these pupils are making, so that they can be challenged to do even better. However, this is inconsistent because some most-able pupils receive more specific advice than others.
- Recently introduced changes to the way that writing is taught across the school have been of particular benefit to most-able pupils. One such pupil, for example, explained how to add suspense to a piece of writing by adding the adverb 'warily'. While there are a number of examples of these more sophisticated writing techniques in the work of most-able pupils, not all such pupils are doing this consistently and regularly.
- Leaders have ensured that the school has an increasingly rich and diverse curriculum, which is of particular benefit to most-able pupils. Inspection evidence shows that pupils are inspired by their curriculum to challenge themselves to produce high quality work. On those occasions when they are individually supported by their teachers to do this, they produce work of a very high standard.
- My second line of enquiry considered how leaders ensure that teaching helps pupils to make good progress in writing, beginning in the early years and throughout the school. In September 2018, leaders introduced new approaches to the teaching of writing that involve a more systematic approach to the planning and preparation of writing by pupils. Pupils are able to explain how they are now better prepared for writing tasks, and how they are developing a deeper understanding of the manipulation of language to change its effect on the reader. For example, one pupil explained how what she has learned this year means that 'we don't tell it – we create a written picture'.
- The school has a well-established and effective approach to the teaching of phonic reading skills to pupils in the early years and key stage 1. Teachers support pupils to apply these skills in their written work. As a consequence, these pupils write well for their age, applying words and sentences with accuracy and clarity.
- Pupils relish the opportunity to write about different subjects and experiences across the whole curriculum. Evidence in their books shows that they can write in a variety of styles for a range of purposes. This writing usually meets the standards that would be expected of a child of their age, although there are not yet enough examples of pupils' writing exceeding these expectations.
- My third line of enquiry examined how leaders ensure that the pupil premium

grant is spent effectively to ensure that disadvantaged pupils make good progress. Leaders have successfully created a highly supportive and nurturing environment for all pupils which benefits the school's small number of disadvantaged pupils. These pupils speak enthusiastically about their learning, and typically produce work in their books of a quality that meets age-related expectations.

- Leaders and teachers have a good understanding of the barriers faced by the school's disadvantaged pupils. Where necessary, measures are taken to provide further support outside the classroom to overcome these barriers. As a consequence, disadvantaged pupils typically make good progress.
- My fourth line of enquiry looked at how leaders ensure that the wider curriculum of non-core subjects such as history and geography is broad and balanced, and supports pupils to make good progress. The school's rich and extensive curriculum is something that pupils and parents value highly. One parent described Fairhaven as 'a fantastic school which provides lots of experiences, both academic and within the broader curriculum'.
- The curriculum supports pupils to acquire extensive knowledge of the history and geography of the local environment. For example, pupils were able to explain in detail the history and human geography of the Norfolk Broads, and show me models that they had made to illustrate this. Pupils strongly value their relationship with their link school in Malawi, and use this as an opportunity to learn about the history and culture of Malawi in their annual Malawi Day.
- While the curriculum is rich and varied, leaders have not yet ensured that it is structured and assessed in a way that enables pupils to build on their learning over time so that they can systematically acquire and retain knowledge of different subject areas.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teaching increasingly challenges most-able pupils in key stage 2 to reach higher standards at the end of the key stage, particularly greater depth in writing, by consistently providing them with more precise and demanding expectations
- the planning and assessment of pupils' learning in non-core subjects such as history and geography enables them to make sustained good progress in their subject knowledge.

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

Yours sincerely

Richard Hopkins
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection I spoke with you and your deputy headteacher, as well as subject leaders, teachers and governors. I met with a group of pupils and spoke individually to other pupils in their classrooms. We visited every classroom together, where we observed pupils' learning, and I looked at a range of pupils' work across different age groups and subjects. I scrutinised documents, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan, and records of governor monitoring. I evaluated safeguarding records, and related school policies. In addition, I examined the school's single central record and looked at the school's website. I took into account 37 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, including 18 free-text comments from parents. I also considered 58 responses to the pupil questionnaire and 15 responses to the staff questionnaire.