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Mr Sean Cornish
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Cornish

Short inspection of Capel St Mary Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 12 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 the school was judged to be good in July 2015.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

The school has gone through a period of significant turbulence in leadership. In 2018, there was a decline in pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2. The proportion of pupils attaining greater depth was also below national averages in key stages 1 and 2. Pupils made less progress in reading across key stage 2 compared to 2017. Following on from this, Suffolk local authority has provided support for leaders to rectify these weaknesses.

Your recent appointment has provided greater stability in leadership. Leaders' self-evaluation provides an honest and realistic analysis of the school, while identifying areas for improvement. Actions in the school development plan are clearly focused on improving outcomes for pupils. Although there is some effective practice in the school, there are inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning and assessment is inconsistent. Leaders have introduced a new tracking system and the school is developing new assessment systems to enable leaders to check the progress of pupils closely.

At the previous inspection, leaders were asked to improve handwriting and the presentation of pupils' written work. Although improvements can be seen in some classes, there are still inconsistencies across the school.

The majority of parents are generally positive about the school. As one parent said, 'The school is very caring and teaches children about the importance of good morals.' Parents recognise the improvements that have been made more recently. One parent summed up the view of many by saying: 'The new headteacher seems very capable and through his positive energy and leadership I believe he has made a visible difference since he started.' However, some parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, expressed their concerns about how the school communicates information about their children's progress and responds to concerns that they have.

Governance is effective. Governors understand their roles and responsibilities. They have become increasingly involved in monitoring by working alongside leaders to review the impact of actions to improve the school. Governors provide both support and challenge to leaders. They also ensure that the views of parents are taken into account.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong and effective culture of safeguarding through the ethos 'If concerned, report it.' Leaders and governors place a high priority on keeping pupils safe and ensure that they fulfil their statutory responsibilities. Staff are watchful for safeguarding risks and signs of harm. They act appropriately when concerns arise so that vulnerable pupils receive timely and effective support. The single central record meets requirements. All the required checks are made on the suitability of adults to work in the school. Policies and procedures are regularly reviewed. Staff receive appropriate training and regular updates. Useful safeguarding information about how to report concerns is displayed around the school.

Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, and say they feel safe in school. They have a good understanding of how to stay safe online as a result of the e-safety lessons which they receive. Pupils spoken to during the inspection do not feel that there is any bullying but were confident that any issues would be swiftly resolved. They understand and uphold the golden rule, 'Treat other people as you want to be treated yourself.'

Inspection findings

- During this inspection I focused on four lines of enquiry: how well reading is taught across the school; the development of reasoning skills in mathematics; how pupils are using their knowledge and understanding of punctuation, spelling and grammar and applying this to their writing; and how effectively leaders monitor the impact of their actions for school improvement.
- New approaches to teaching reading, although in their early stages of development, are beginning to help develop pupils' enthusiasm for reading. For

example, pupils in Years 3 and 4 were highly engaged in writing following reading the text 'In The Woods' and were keen to talk about their learning.

- Pupils develop their phonic skills well because of good modelling by teachers to support pupils in their learning. In early years, children have many opportunities to develop their basic skills with appropriate resources to support them. For example, children were observed working cooperatively together to design a crate for a tiger to travel to the zoo after reading the book 'Dear Zoo'. Additionally, Year 1 pupils used their knowledge of phonics to confidently and accurately write their own sentences. However, pupils are not fully aware of how they are applying their reading skills across a range of subjects.
- In mathematics lessons, teachers use questioning effectively to address misconceptions and challenge pupils. Teachers model approaches to solving problems clearly and pupils are increasingly confident when explaining their reasoning in mathematics. Regular assessments ensure that staff identify gaps in learning for mathematics and provide targeted programmes of support to help pupils. Work in mathematics books is well presented, showing the steps pupils take to solve the challenges they are given.
- Punctuation, spelling and grammar are taught routinely alongside the teaching of writing. This results in pupils understanding how to use these writing skills when they write independently. Where the school's chosen checklists are used, they focus pupils on what they need to include in their writing to be successful. Teachers encourage pupils to write using a range of genres, but pupils do not always respond to teachers' feedback by editing and improving their writing. Pupils do not always have appropriate resources to make the link and apply their knowledge and understanding of punctuation, spelling and grammar that they are learning to their own writing. Teachers do not have high enough expectations for presentation, and the quality of pupils' handwriting is often variable. Teachers do not use assessment information effectively during, and between, lessons to adapt and modify tasks or to identify gaps in pupils' learning.
- Many middle leaders are new to their roles or inexperienced in leading a subject area. While you are supporting them, they do not yet fully understand their role in monitoring their area of responsibility and this development work is still in its infancy. Consequently, middle leaders do not demonstrate that they effectively contribute to raising standards throughout the school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- subject leaders continue to develop, so they contribute effectively to raising standards of achievement
- teachers use assessment accurately to plan teaching that meets pupils' needs, ensuring that they make consistently good progress
- pupils' achievement in reading and writing improves, by:

- providing increased opportunities for pupils to write at length and use their knowledge and understanding of grammar, punctuation and spelling effectively to edit and improve their work
- making sure teachers have higher expectations for pupils' handwriting and presentation of their work
- ensuring that pupils have opportunities to practise reading skills in other curriculum areas.

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

Yours sincerely

Pauline MacMillan
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

We discussed the key lines of enquiry for this inspection, the school's internal evaluation of its performance, plans for future improvement and information about pupils' progress and attainment.

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, five subject leaders, seven governors, including the chair of the governing body, and administrative staff. I had a telephone conversation with a representative from Suffolk local authority and an alternative provider. Together, we visited classes to observe teaching and learning. I looked at a sample of pupils' current work in a range of subjects. I spoke informally to a number of pupils in classrooms about their learning and met with a group of pupils to talk about their school experience. I also observed pupils' behaviour in lessons, as they moved around the classes and at playtimes. I scrutinised the school's safeguarding and child protection procedures and records of checks leaders make on the suitability of staff to work with children. I considered the views of parents through 46 responses to Parent View, 29 free-text messages and one letter received during the inspection. I took account of 25 responses from staff to Ofsted's online questionnaire.