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Dear Ms Wones

### **Short inspection of Sutton CofE VC Infant School**

Following my visit to the school on 30 January 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 April 2015.

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

The leadership team, guided by strong governance, has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. In a period where there have been significant changes in staffing, leaders and governors have maintained the caring ethos in which many pupils succeed socially and academically. Adults know pupils well and use this information to make sure that the curriculum, care and learning environment are adapted to the needs of each age group. For example, leaders have made sure that the early years outdoor learning space is full of resources that help children develop their social and team-working skills.

The school is one of three in the Swallowtail Federation of Schools (the federation). Being part of the federation is having a significant beneficial impact on the quality of education provided. Staff and leaders gave numerous examples of how the training, sharing of good practice and school-to-school checks on the accuracy of assessment information are helping improve the quality of their work. Inspection evidence endorses their views.

Teachers and teaching assistants are unanimously supportive of leaders' work. Staff told me that they are well led, listened to and cared for. They also explained that where there have been changes, leaders are considerate of their workload. Morale is high, and staff are reflective practitioners who are keen to improve. Consequently, when leaders act to bring about improvements, staff work together to make sure they are successful. An example of the impact of this is the success

with which staff have worked together to improve how reading is taught across the school since the previous inspection. During the well-attended parent and child reading session on the morning of this inspection, pupils demonstrated that they are keen and increasingly accomplished readers. A high proportion of pupils achieve the expected standard in reading by the end of key stage 1.

You and your senior team have carefully crafted a strategy to involve parents in the work of the school and their children's learning. Parents are highly appreciative of the work of leaders and their staff. They told me that leaders have gone to considerable lengths to make sure parents are well informed about and, where appropriate, included in their children's learning. One successful example of this is the home visits that the early years leader makes to meet with children, and their families, before the children join the school. Parents commented on how welcoming staff are and how teachers successfully 'fulfil our children's individual needs'. Almost all parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, would recommend the school to other parents.

Pupils' behaviour is reflective of the school's values of kindness, friendship and courage. Significantly, pupils recognise the impact and importance of these values in their school life. One pupil explained how they make school a, 'safe place to make friends and learn', while another explained how, 'courage makes me try harder in my learning'. The respectful relationships that exist in school contribute to the happy, positive atmosphere of which staff and pupils are justifiably proud.

Governors share leaders' highest aspirations for pupils and staff. Governors, several of whom have experience in education, have played their full part in sustaining and building on the good quality of education provided. The governing body gains its information about the quality of education from a variety of sources, including the head of school, subject leaders and their own visits to the school. When good practice has been identified, governors rightly acknowledge staff's work and then ask the question, 'How can we build on this?' Governors are themselves reflective. While they know what is taught across the wider curriculum they do not have such a clear grasp of the quality of that which is being taught.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders have made sure that maintaining pupils' well-being is at the forefront of staff's work. Adults receive appropriate safeguarding training and updates. Leaders assure themselves of staff's understanding of school safeguarding systems by carrying out random spot checks of adults' knowledge of policy and procedures. This helps to ensure that staff take seriously their responsibilities with regard to keeping pupils safe. Teachers and teaching assistants explained to me the importance of noting any concerns they have and recording every detail with care and precision.

Staff told me that when they pass on any niggles or concerns they have about a pupil's welfare to leaders they are acted upon swiftly and effectively. Leaders' securely kept and carefully maintained records confirm this to be the case.

Pupils say they are safe and that they feel safe. Almost all parents agree that their children are safe and well cared for at school. Leaders provide opportunities through the taught curriculum for pupils to develop an age-appropriate understanding of keeping themselves safe. Consequently, pupils understand the risks they may face when using the internet and how to act safely when online.

Pupils know what bullying is and the upset it can cause. They say it is very rare and adults resolve any disputes quickly and well. Pupils also told me that, should they be anxious or worried, they trust that adults will listen to them and help them manage any concerns they may have.

### **Inspection findings**

- The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics by the end of key stage 1 was above that found nationally in 2016 and 2017. It fell in 2018 and was broadly in line with the national average. Therefore, I wanted to establish if pupils currently in school were making good or better progress in mathematics.
- Leaders have rightly made bringing about improvements in mathematics a key priority in their school development plan. They have carefully analysed the quality of teaching, the suitability of resources and the breadth of pupils' knowledge and skills in mathematics. Leaders are making effective use of this information and of the expertise that exists across the federation to bring about necessary changes.
- The early years leader has developed an environment and a curriculum that are rich with opportunities for children to develop their understanding of numbers and basic mathematics. Adults take every chance to encourage children to recognise numbers, shapes and measures. For example, children were thoroughly enjoying using counting blocks to compare the size their feet and those of their teachers. Evidence from children's work demonstrates that they acquire a secure understanding of early mathematics over time.
- Leaders have provided key stage 1 teachers with appropriate training and opportunities to work with other teachers within the federation. Teachers say that they are more assured and effective in their teaching of mathematics. Inspection evidence confirms this to be the case. Teachers use their secure subject knowledge to provide pupils with logical sequences of learning that build up their awareness of and confidence in using basic mathematical knowledge.
- Pupils told me how much they enjoyed learning about mathematics. They are responding well to the harder mathematical problems they are presented with and are typically making good progress as a result. However, teachers are not as adept at moving most-able pupils on in their learning in as timely a fashion as they could. Therefore, some of these pupils do not reach the high standards of which they are capable.
- To establish if the school continues to provide a good quality of education, I explored whether pupils make good progress in subjects other than English and mathematics. Again, leaders have recognised, in their development plans, this as an area in which further advances can be made. Leaders have carefully

constructed a curriculum in which attention is paid to how the chosen themes develop pupils' factual awareness as well as subject-specific skills. To sustain pupils' interest and enjoyment in their learning, leaders have made sure the curriculum is enriched by appropriate visits and visitors. Leaders also ensure that the curriculum provides pupils with lots of chances to learn about their immediate and wider community.

- In early years, leaders make sure there is a well-balanced focus on the prime areas of learning – personal, social and emotional development; physical development; communication and language. This prepares children well for key stage 1.
- In many subjects in key stage 1, teachers ensure that learning is carefully sequenced, and pupils securely gain subject-specific knowledge and skills. Where this is done well pupils' progress is strong and often good. For example, pupils' art work was illustrative of their learned knowledge of primary and secondary colours, the colour wheel and brush techniques. There is a similar coherence evident in religious education and often in science.
- Some aspects of the curriculum lack this cohesion. This is the case in geography and history. Teachers' subject knowledge is not as strong in these subjects and learning activities are less rich in content and the development of subject-specific skills. Consequently, pupils make slower progress and not enough is demanded of those who are most able.
- My final line of enquiry was to establish the action leaders are taking to ensure that pupils attend as often as they should. Since the previous inspection, pupils' attendance has been in line with, or better than, the national average. This was not the case in 2018, when attendance fell and was lower than it should have been.
- Leaders have gone a long way towards rectifying this situation through a combination of actions. Leaders have increased parental awareness of the importance of attendance through regular updates in the school's newsletters. Leaders have also heightened pupils' understanding of the importance of good attendance through weekly rewards for pupils with high attendance.
- When a pupil's attendance starts to fall, leaders rightly work with parents to make sure it improves. Inspection evidence shows that where leaders have taken this action each pupil's attendance has improved, in some cases substantially. As a result, overall attendance is currently in line with national averages and no groups are disadvantaged by low attendance.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in mathematics so that the most able pupils make good or better progress
- governors gain a more thorough understanding of the quality of education across the wider curriculum

- the curriculum for geography and history is carefully sequenced and well delivered to enable all pupils to make good or better progress.

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

John Lucas  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

I discussed the key lines of enquiry for this inspection with you and other members of the leadership team. Together, we also explored your evaluation of the quality of education, plans for future improvement and information about current pupils' learning. I met with other leaders, a member of the administration team, a group of six teachers and teaching assistants, and the chair of the governing body, along with two other governors.

I scrutinised: minutes of meetings of the governing body; the school's improvement plan and self-evaluation document; and leaders' pupil premium and physical education and sports premium reports. I also examined the school's safeguarding arrangements, records, files and documentation.

Together with you and other senior leaders, I observed pupils' learning and looked at examples of pupils' work in each class to explore the progress they are making over time. I also heard pupils read during the parent and child reading session on the morning of the inspection. I spoke with one group of pupils and with others informally during lessons and at breaktime regarding their learning. There were no responses to the pupil online survey.

I considered the views of parents I spoke with at the start of the school day. I also took into account the views of 32 parents who responded on Parent View and the 11 parents who left comments on the Parent View free-text service. I also took account of the views expressed by one parent in a phone call to Ofsted on the day of inspection.

There were no responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.