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Mr Nicholas Arnold
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Dear Mr Arnold

Short inspection of North Newton Community Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 21 November 2017, 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 2014.

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 provides a happy and exciting place in which children can learn. In addition, good teaching inspires pupils to work hard and achieve in both their personal and academic development. Pupils develop a love of learning. When they leave North Newton at the end of Year 6, they are well prepared for the next stage of their education. In 2017, the proportions of pupils reaching the expected and higher standards by the end of key stage 2 were higher than national averages in reading, writing and mathematics.

Your commitment to provide a rich and rounded education for pupils can be seen in the wide range of clubs the school provides. Last academic year, almost all of your pupils took part in at least one of the 24 clubs on offer. Parents are positive about their children's education under your guidance.

Since the last inspection, there have been a number of staff changes. Governors have appointed teachers who share your drive and ambition. Consequently, staff morale is high. The collegiate approach your staff take has shaped a strong team where everyone recognises they are a leader. Your work with a local group of schools, 'The Compass Group', has served to strengthen teachers' subject knowledge and leadership skills.

You acted diligently to deal with the areas for improvement from the last inspection and have successfully tackled previous weaknesses in writing. The lead teacher for writing ensures that teachers understand the increased demands of the curriculum and helps them to inspire pupils' love for writing. Writing is now a strength of the school. In 2017, the proportions of pupils meeting and exceeding the expected standards were above the national averages at both key stages 1 and 2. Pupils write accurately and across a range of curriculum areas. Their neat and cursive handwriting reflects the huge pride they take in their work. Such is their motivation for writing, many pupils take part in national writing competitions and win recognition for their efforts.

You know your school well and are candid about what needs to improve. Despite the school having many strengths, you are not complacent. You recognise that the next step in the school's evolution is to 'fine tune' your approach to target setting and monitoring teachers' work so that there is a greater emphasis on pupils' progress and not just attainment.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have created a strong culture of safeguarding within the school. All staff, including governors, undertake training in child protection. Staff know how to keep pupils safe from abuse, exploitation and radical or extreme views. The school's policies to ensure that pupils are well protected are in place. You and your staff involve pupils in debating and sharing their views. This, pupils say, helps them to think about what is right and wrong. It gives them confidence to express their views and the strength not to be swayed by others.

The checks undertaken on staff, visitors and the large number of volunteers are stringent. School staff work with a wide range of outside agencies to ensure that pupils are supported effectively. Parents strongly praise the approachability of you and your staff team. In addition, the family support worker provides wide-ranging support for pupils and families. This is making a positive difference. The attendance of pupils who were previously persistently absent from school has greatly improved.

Governors make detailed and regular checks on the school's security and safety arrangements to assure themselves that children are safe. Recent improvements to the school's boundary fencing have served to strengthen the school's security.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry focused on the effectiveness of leaders' strategies to support pupils' strong progress over time, including for disadvantaged pupils. In 2017, although outcomes were above national averages, pupils' progress was just average. Teachers make good use of their assessments to match work to pupils' needs. You and your senior teacher have successfully led the drive to improve pupils' outcomes so that more achieve at least the expected standards for their age. In fact, with the exception of reading at the end of key stage 1,

more pupils are achieving the higher standards than those typically seen nationally.

- You have small cohorts of pupils in the school, and few are disadvantaged. You and your governing body carefully plan the expenditure of the pupil premium to ensure that any barriers to learning are removed. Now that standards are high, you recognise the need to sharpen assessment practices even further so that teachers help more pupils to achieve accelerated rates of progress.
- Next, I looked at the effectiveness of the support for pupils in key stage 1 who had weaker reading skills. Compared to national figures, fewer pupils achieved the expected and higher standards in reading at key stage 1 in 2017. Governors' heavy investment in new books has re-energised pupils' love for reading. Additional staff training has strengthened the teaching of reading. Teachers have provided information evenings and homework guidance for parents. All of these actions have served to tackle underachievement. In particular, those pupils who were struggling in Year 2 are making accelerated progress to catch up this year. For those pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, your highly skilled leader works closely with teachers to carefully plan and monitor pupils' progress. Pupils are quickly gaining the skills and confidence they need to read fluently and understand what they are reading.
- My third line of enquiry focused on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in mathematics in providing challenge for the middle-attaining and the most able mathematicians. The progress information for Year 6 pupils in the 2017 cohort showed that some pupils did not make the progress they should in mathematics. The greater emphasis on developing pupils' mathematical reasoning and understanding is leading to improved standards for all. However, a lack of secure knowledge of number facts holds some pupils back from making accelerated progress. Pupils are enjoying the competitions and the quick-fire homework tasks that teachers have set but it is too soon to see impact of this work.
- Finally, we looked at the impact of the school's curriculum on pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills. The curriculum information you provide on the school's website is comprehensive. You have ensured that the curriculum provided is not just broad but it is also deep. Teachers start with what pupils know, understand and can do and design the curriculum around these key aspects. Pupils' writing has been enhanced through the many opportunities for writing across other subjects. Pupils' skills in history and geography are built upon as they move through the school. In addition, by the time pupils are in Year 6, they have a good grasp of key vocabulary in French and are able to write accurately formed sentences. You have consulted pupils and parents to design homework activities that pupils enjoy and deepen their learning. The wide-ranging clubs, residential visits and activities all enhance pupils' education.
- Your curriculum provision creates curiosity and a thirst for knowledge in your pupils. Effective whole-school and bespoke staff training and performance discussions have supported teachers to plan learning that ignites pupils' interests. Pupils told me that 'the teachers are great, they really care and they make learning fun'.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teaching continues to improve pupils' fluency in mathematics
- governors provide leaders with a more robust challenge based on a sharper focus on pupils' progress.

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

Yours sincerely

Tracy Hannon
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I spoke to you, staff, pupils and two members of the governing body. I made visits to lessons with either yourself or your senior teacher to observe pupils' attitudes to learning and to scrutinise their work. I listened to pupils read and met with middle leaders to carry out further reviews of pupils' work.

A range of documentary evidence was considered, which included the school's self-evaluation, the development plans, and attendance, behaviour and safeguarding documentation.

In addition, I took account of 28 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, and 18 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.