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Mrs Amy Arnold  
Headteacher  
Barnham Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School  
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Dear Mrs Arnold

### **Short inspection of Barnham Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 8 March 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 July 2013.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. During this time, you and your governors have steered the school through reorganisation and integration of Years 5 and 6 pupils effectively.

Since your appointment in January 2015, you have developed the skills of governors and new leaders well. From September 2016, you have built a cohesive and energetic leadership team that shares your passion and drive for continual improvement. You, senior leaders and governors are extremely accurate in your evaluation of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. The school's new tracking system enables pupils' progress to be robustly checked from accurate teacher assessment and evidence of their work. You are a reflective leader developing new initiatives to continually move the school forward. You share your expertise with schools within and beyond the locality.

Staff and governors appreciate your inspirational leadership and are proud of the progress the school has made since you arrived. They talk enthusiastically about the school's irresistible curriculum where learning is brought to life with exciting real-life experiences for staff and pupils. This motivates pupils to want to learn from experiences 'in the real world'. They are keen to succeed, resulting in well-presented work and high-quality displays around the school.

As I walked into the school, a welcoming, calm atmosphere was immediately apparent. You are rightly proud of your dedicated staff and hardworking, well-behaved pupils. Relationships between adults and pupils are warm and respectful. The most vulnerable pupils and their families are well cared for. It is clear that you have the highest expectations of staff and pupils. Consequently, pupils now achieve well, academically and socially, in this fully inclusive school.

Staff, parents and pupils praise the school. Overwhelmingly, they see the school as a welcoming, safe place. Staff morale is extremely high and as one staff member stated, 'the children are a credit to the school, the parents are extremely supportive, the staff are amazing and I am very lucky to work here'. A typical response from the many positive comments from parents stated 'when you send your child into school, you want them to feel safe, enjoy their education, make friends and receive the best education possible. Barnham School does all of this and more.'

Since the previous inspection, staff now share effective best practice across the school. Support for staff new to their teaching career is of a high standard. You and your leaders have ensured that an effective feedback and monitoring policy is implemented consistently across the school to support pupils' learning further. You are proud that the proportion of Year 6 pupils who achieved the expected level in reading, writing and mathematics combined in 2016 was above the national average. However, you acknowledge that there is more work to be done to ensure that the most able pupils exceed the expected standards at the end of key stages 1 and 2 in reading, writing and mathematics. While observing lessons we could see new teaching and learning strategies being implemented well, but they have not yet had time to impact on pupils' outcomes.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The culture of safeguarding in your school is exemplary. As the designated safeguarding lead, you ensure that all staff and governors receive regular, up-to-date training. Staff work tirelessly to keep pupils safe from harm. This can be seen in your meticulous record-keeping and work with external agencies. You and your staff work effectively with vulnerable families, which is a reflection of the school's inclusive ethos. High-quality risk assessments are in place, especially for the many outside learning activities.

Pupils feel safe in school and have a good understanding of how to keep safe. This is because the curriculum and assemblies provide regular and appropriate opportunities for them to learn how to keep safe, including when going online and when using mobile phones. Pupils told me that bullying is rare, but if they have any concerns then adults will deal with them effectively.

Attendance is high because your staff rigorously monitor pupils' absence. Attendance for the few persistent absentees is improving, especially for disadvantaged pupils.

## Inspection findings

- The first line of enquiry was looking at standards in mathematics. This was because it was identified as an area for improvement at the previous inspection, and in 2016 the Year 6 pupils made less progress in mathematics than reading and writing. Outcomes in key stages 1 and 2 for 2016 were in line with national results or just above.
- Recently, staff have had high-quality professional development to help them challenge pupils' mathematical thinking, which is beginning to improve pupils' depth of understanding. Pupils spoke to me confidently about their learning using correct mathematical vocabulary and clear explanations. Additionally, staff are providing more opportunities for problem solving and practical activities to support pupils' learning further. Most pupils are now making good progress in mathematics across both key stages. We saw this when checking the school's tracking system and looking in pupils' books. However, these new effective teaching and learning strategies have not yet had time to enable the most able pupils to reach the higher standards.
- We saw evidence of how the irresistible curriculum is developing pupils' thinking in exciting real-life contexts. For example, Year 6 pupils completed field trials and tests on two tractors to see which one the farmer should buy. This resulted in the application of a range of mathematical skills when comparing the weights of the tractors, speed and fuel consumption, and trial performance.
- I investigated how leaders are improving outcomes in reading and writing in key stages 1 and 2. Overall, pupils' progress and attainment results in 2016 were in line with the national average or just above. Leaders and staff are already improving pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar in key stage 2. Additionally, key stage 1 staff have had high-quality training in a combined reading, writing and phonics strategy to further improve pupils' literacy skills. These younger pupils are now using their strong knowledge of phonics to support their spelling, writing and reading skills.
- The use of reading journals across the school is supporting pupils to identify features of texts to help them understand the books they read. The Year 6 and Year 2 pupils I listened to read, spoke enthusiastically about their texts and read with fluency and understanding. Teachers ensure that pupils are reading books that are at the right level of challenge and interest to encourage their enjoyment of reading.
- We saw many opportunities for pupils to extend their writing skills in key stage 2 across the curriculum in their topic and science work as well as in their English books, for example, writing instructions for how to make string from the bark of a silver birch and writing a recount of an archaeological dig in a local clay pit. However, in key stage 1, even though they have many exciting learning experiences, there were fewer opportunities seen in topic books for pupils to write at length to further develop their writing skills.
- How well the school uses its pupil premium funding to support the small number of disadvantaged pupils, to ensure that they make the best possible progress, was an area of focus for the inspection. You and your staff identify and support

the needs of individual disadvantaged pupils effectively. We saw that the disadvantaged pupils are making good progress, similar to others in the school, by looking at their work in books and information in the school's tracking system. Pupil premium funding is spent effectively to improve disadvantaged pupils' academic achievement, social skills and behaviour. The school's breakfast club, after-school clubs and outdoor learning activities, combined with appropriate intervention, targeted support and access to the school's counsellor, and child and family support practitioner, help to ensure that disadvantaged pupils achieve well in your school.

- I investigated how leaders ensure that children make good progress from their starting points in the early years. Together, we observed the stimulating learning environment in the mixed-aged Reception and Year 1 classroom where the early years children worked with the older pupils, preparing them well for learning in Year 1. The children enjoyed their various activities related to a pond creature. Some children developed their counting skills by scooping up the pond creature's coloured water crystals and counting them carefully into large shells. Others used their knowledge of phonics to support their spelling when writing about caring for a pond creature. Speaking and listening skills are developed well during children's independent learning. Outside, some children made stick puppets and performed a puppet show for their friends. Others dug in the sand inside the 'beach in a hut', where they enthusiastically discussed digging for hidden treasure prompted by adults' considered questioning. Observations of children's learning, looking at their work in books and on their individual wall space, together with electronic assessments, show that Reception pupils are making good progress from their various starting points.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to challenge the most able pupils in reading, writing and mathematics through the school's irresistible curriculum to enable more pupils to reach the higher standards
- key stage 1 pupils have more opportunities to write at length in other subjects to develop their writing skills further.

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

Julie Harrison  
**Ofsted Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

- I met with you, senior and middle leaders, governors and a representative of the local authority.
- I listened to pupils reading and spoke with a group of pupils.
- I looked at a range of documentation including information about the school's self-evaluation and plans for future improvement.
- Policies and procedures for the safeguarding of pupils were examined including mandatory checks and case studies about referrals made to external agencies.
- We visited all classrooms together to observe pupils' learning and look at work in pupils' books.
- I spoke with several parents when they were bringing children to school.
- I took account of the views of 20 staff, 49 pupils and 20 parents who responded to Ofsted's online surveys.