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Mrs C Reich  
Executive headteacher  
Duchy of Lancaster Methwold CofE Primary School  
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Dear Mrs Reich

### **Short inspection of Duchy of Lancaster Methwold CofE Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 29 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in May 2013.

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

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

You have deployed your strong leadership skills to very good effect in addressing a number of challenges the school has faced. You used your evaluative skills and judgement to quickly and accurately identify the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Your head of school has recently left due to promotion. You have taken the opportunity to review the leadership structure of the three schools in the Trinity Partnership and have appointed a highly experienced senior leader who is to be executive deputy headteacher of all three schools. You also have plans in place to appoint a head of inclusion, and either this person or the executive deputy headteacher will be based in this school. These arrangements are well considered and aim to secure stability and continued strong and strategic leadership in the years to come.

When I met with your early years leader and the leaders of English and mathematics, I was impressed with their insightful knowledge and understanding of how their roles make a difference in continuing to improve pupils' outcomes. The early years leader spoke proudly about how one learning activity leads smoothly into the next one in Reception Year, and how she has engaged more parents in contributing to your online assessment system of children's progress. The early years leader also acknowledged that the children's outdoor space could be further

developed through the addition of more resources, and that children's understanding of number remains an area for improvement.

Your newly appointed English leader is highly regarded by members of staff. She has conveyed a clear message that all teachers are accountable for pupils' outcomes in English, and not solely those in Year 2 and Year 6. Your mathematics leader demonstrated a very good understanding of the concept of mastery. You have chosen to teach mathematics as a discrete subject, and this is having a positive impact on pupils' outcomes.

The small school is a happy and welcoming environment. Classrooms and corridors are adorned with colourful displays which model good writing and which celebrate pupils' work. Pupils are proud of their school. They wear their uniform smartly and behave very well. No pupils have been excluded from school for a number of years, which is testament to your high expectations and care and support. Each class also has their own outdoor space and pupils have a say as to how this space is set up.

The governing body is responsible for the governance arrangements of this school and the two others in the Trinity Partnership. Between them, the governors have a good range of skills covering finance, education and safeguarding. They visit the school regularly. They use the school improvement plan to monitor, evaluate and review your work and that of other leaders. My scrutiny of minutes of governors' meetings shows that governors ask pertinent and challenging questions of you and your senior leadership team. They also focus sharply on the performance of different groups of pupils when challenging leaders about pupils' outcomes.

The number of pupils in your Year 6 cohort for 2016 was very small at eight. Only one of these had been at the school for their whole school career. Being aware that the achievement of such a small cohort is difficult to compare with national averages, I considered a number of case studies for these pupils, as well as looking at information on their individual progress. Nearly all of these pupils had extenuating circumstances which impacted on their progress, despite your best efforts. Hence, published data on their achievement does not look positive. However, I am certain that most of these pupils made effective progress during the time they were in your school, and that you could have done very little more to support them.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Safeguarding children is a strong aspect of this school's provision. All staff have received and read the latest guidance 'Keeping children safe in education' (2016) and demonstrated a strong awareness of safeguarding issues. All staff have also undergone training in the government's 'Prevent' duty. Staff, including those who join the school mid-year, receive up-to-date training on safeguarding matters. The school's record of recruitment checks on the suitability of staff is compliant with current requirements.

Pupils are taught well about keeping safe, including e-safety. On the day of this

inspection, a police community service officer had been invited to the school to talk to pupils about the risks associated with using social networking sites.

Records kept by the school of children who are at risk or deemed to be vulnerable are very well maintained and informative, with details of resolution. They are kept securely and appropriate external agencies are informed as and when necessary.

## **Inspection findings**

- My first line of enquiry looked at actions taken by the school's leaders to address weaknesses in mathematics in key stages 1 and 2. Having considered the curriculum carefully and its impact on pupils' outcomes, you took the decision to teach mathematics as a discrete subject. This also meant that the subject plans had to be remodelled to meet this requirement. These plans, and my observations of mathematics teaching, confirm that the needs of individual pupils are being met better than previously.
- Teachers have a good understanding of the concept of mastery, and my scrutiny of pupils' books shows that pupils are acquiring a deeper knowledge and understanding of mathematical skills and concepts. They are able to apply these skills more consistently. Your subject leader for mathematics also led a successful training day for staff to launch the new calculation policy. As a result of staff implementing this policy, greater progression in calculation can be seen from Reception Year to Year 6.
- Your achievement information for current pupils in mathematics demonstrates that the strategies you have deployed are reaping rewards. Apart from Year 1, progress in mathematics has improved, but can still improve further. Your Year 6 pupils have just sat last year's arithmetic paper as a practice exercise, and the results were pleasing, although the differences between disadvantaged pupils and others have not yet diminished.
- For my second line of enquiry, I looked at the progress being made by pupils currently in the school. I reviewed your current information on pupils' progress, observed the quality of teaching pupils typically experience and looked at the work in their books. Progress being made across the school is largely positive. You acknowledge that more boys could achieve age-related expectations in Year 3 and that boys would benefit from more guided reading in Year 1. Pupils also told me in my discussions that they would welcome more up-to-date reading books in the library. Your English subject leader also acknowledged that some of your guided reading resources are outdated.
- I observed pupils in Years 5 and 6 taking part in an exciting and active mathematics lesson which had been very well planned to meet their needs. The Year 6 pupils were using proportions and ratios to work out the ingredients for a cupcake recipe. This activity was linked to food technology and enterprise, as they then went on to bake the cupcakes and planned to sell these at a profit to fund a Year 6 activity. The so-called 'Duchy dealers' showed great enthusiasm when attempting this task, and used their mathematical skills to good effect.
- My third line of enquiry looked at how well you are addressing the lower

attendance of pupils who receive special educational needs support, albeit this is a very small proportion of your total number of pupils on roll. Your overall attendance for September to March is slightly below your target of 96%. The attendance of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, although still below that of their classmates, is improving. Your school secretary is meticulous in the way she monitors pupils' attendance and follows up any first-day absences. She produces a weekly attendance summary which enables you to quickly identify any patterns or trends. You have also worked productively with the attendance officer from Norfolk County Council to help reduce cases of persistent absence. You have also dedicated a room for more vulnerable pupils and this is managed by well-trained members of staff who carry out effective work with pupils who may attend less regularly than their peers or who have low self-esteem. This work has helped to improve pupils' emotional resilience.

- My final line of enquiry looked at how your links with the two other schools in the Trinity Partnership have contributed towards school improvement and benefited this school. The fact that you are executive headteacher of this and the two other primary schools in the partnership enables you to have an effective oversight of what works well in one school, and to share the good practice when this is required. Examples of this collaborative work include establishing common systems for assessing pupils' work in reading, writing, mathematics and grammar, punctuation and spelling. Staff across the three partner schools moderate each other's assessments in order to establish a more accurate picture of how well pupils are progressing in these subjects. The fact that one governing body is responsible for all three schools also means that governors can identify what works well in one school, and challenge why it is less effective in another.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- The outdoor space for early years is enhanced by the addition of further resources, and children's understanding of number is developed further.
- Progress in key stage 1 is more rapid, particularly in Year 1, and boys' progress in Year 3 improves.
- The recently introduced initiatives in mathematics demonstrate their impact through improved outcomes by the end of the academic year.
- The outdated guided reading books are reviewed so that they meet the needs of pupils better, particularly of boys in Year 1.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education

for the Diocese of Ely, 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 Daniell  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

I met with you, as well as the early years leader and subject leaders for English and mathematics, to discuss progress since the previous inspection. I met with the chair of the governing body and two representatives from the Diocese of Ely multi-academy trust. I scrutinised a variety of sources of information, including your self-evaluation, the school's plans for improvement and assessment information for all year groups. I held a meeting to examine the school's safeguarding and child protection procedures, the records of checks leaders make on the suitability of staff to work with children and information relating to attendance. We both undertook observations of learning across the school, viewed work in pupils' books and spoke with pupils about their learning when visiting lessons. I took account of the views of 14 staff and 46 pupils who responded to the online survey. I also considered the 18 Parent View responses.