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Mrs Eliza Hollis  
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Tiffield Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School  
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Dear Mrs Hollis

### **Short inspection of Tiffield Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 10 January 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 February 2013.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have created an inclusive culture at Tiffield Primary school where pupils think learning is fun, parents say their children are happy at school and staff appreciate the way you listen to their views and opinions. Staff told me that Tiffield is, 'somewhere we love coming to work.'

Tiffield Church of England Primary School is much smaller than the average-sized primary school. It is one of four schools that make up the Forest CE Federation of Schools, with one governing body. The school's brings its motto, 'Small enough to care, large enough to inspire', to life daily. You and the other staff know the pupils very well. You have made sure that pupils benefit from the nurturing environment you have created in this small school, while capitalising on the advantages of being part of a larger federation. You have secured strong links between the four schools in the federation. This means that staff training and development often takes place jointly.

Everyone associated with the school, including the pupils themselves, recognises this positive culture. They told me that everyone cares for each other at Tiffield and that they enjoy the activities that are available to them across the federation, such as sporting events, joint trips or residential visits and working with pupils from other schools. Pupils told me that they learn about faiths and cultures that are different to

their own. They visit places of worship and can participate in a residential visit to the Isle of Wight and France. Pupils spoke very respectfully and knowledgeably about different faiths and cultures. They know this is preparing them well for life beyond primary school.

During the last inspection, inspectors recognised that pupils are well behaved, confident, courteous and keen to learn. This was evident during my visit to the school. Pupils also told me that behaviour is good in school. They were keen to tell me that learning is fun and that they enjoy the 'federation days' when pupils from all four schools across the federation come together. Recent examples have included the celebration of Her Majesty the Queen's birthday, visits to the theatre and Christmas productions.

At the last inspection, inspectors asked you to make sure that teachers match work more precisely to pupils' ability and ensure that pupils know what they have to achieve by the end of the lesson. You were also asked to ensure that class discussions engage all pupils and that the standard of work across all subjects is as good as it is in English and mathematics. During the inspection, you and I visited both classes to see the learning that was taking place. We also looked closely at a sample of pupils' work from each class. We saw that the work pupils were doing was just right for them. Teachers were providing pupils with sufficient challenge and support so that they were making progress. Pupils who were in discussion with teachers and teaching assistants were engaged and participated well. In pupils' books, we saw that work is well matched to pupils' ability and that teachers are ensuring that pupils use the skills they have learned in English lessons as they write across a range of subjects. We noticed, however, that, in a few instances, teachers' expectations of presentation in pupils' topic books were not high enough.

Inspectors also asked you to increase governors' involvement in checking how well pupils are doing. There is a schedule for governors to come into school and monitor pupil's progress. They do this through talking to staff and pupils and looking at books, for example. The standards committee meets termly to discuss the progress pupils are making. Recently, several governors have come to the end of their term of office and some of the governing body's knowledge and understanding of the school has been lost. A few existing governors remain on the board to carry this knowledge forward, along with some new governors. Some vacancies remain unfilled.

In addition to making improvements identified in the last inspection, you have focused on making other improvements wherever they may be required. The local authority has provided useful support to you, for example in developing the quality of teaching and in seeking out good practice at other schools for staff to learn from. On the day of the inspection, staff from the local authority were due to undertake a review of governance, at your request. This was to make sure that, as you fill the remaining vacancies for governors, the newly appointed governors are bringing important skills to the board. This review will take place shortly.

Last year, you and other leaders rightly noticed that there was a dip in the progress pupils in key stage two made in writing. You wasted no time in identifying the causes for this. You and other leaders are outward-looking in your approach to school improvement. With the support of the local authority and your own knowledge of schools locally, you and other leaders visited several schools to see good practice in the teaching of writing. You revised the school's approach to teaching writing in both classes. You ensured that all staff have received training and you check carefully that the new approach is being followed. Our visits to classes and our scrutiny of pupils' books showed that the new approach is being followed. However, you have rightly recognised that the new approach has not yet had the full impact you intended. School assessment information and pupils' writing show that pupils have made good progress during the autumn term.

You have implemented a system of assessment to check the progress pupils are making and to plan learning that matches their next steps. Your assessment system shows that current pupils of all abilities are making good progress from their individual starting points. The very small number of pupils in some year groups means that you track the progress each pupil is making in detail. You and other leaders work with teachers to write a short provision plan for each child based on the progress they have been making to ensure that any gaps in understanding are addressed. Equally, you note where the most-able pupils who are capable of achieving a higher level of understanding are challenged to do so. At the time of the inspection, the school had no disadvantaged pupils and, therefore, no pupil premium funding.

The school's plans for improvement include all aspects of development in the federation. This means that while the improvements you have planned for Tiffield are part of the plan, they are not identified specifically. The absence of particular details of the improvements that you have planned for Tiffield means it is more difficult for governors to hold you and other leaders fully to account for the work that you are doing.

The parent's forum has developed since its inception so that, in addition to providing a forum for parents to air their views with you, you have introduced working parties for parents to become involved in particular aspects of the school. For example, a working party of parents is currently considering improvements to how teachers inform parents about their children's progress.

Parents that I spoke with and those who responded to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, all said that their children are safe, happy and well cared for at Tiffield. Parents praised the family atmosphere, how included they feel in the life of the school and how teachers are engaging pupils in their learning. One parent said, 'They go over and above with the teaching to really engage the children.'

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You ensure that all the necessary checks take place before a member of staff starts to work at Tiffield. Staff training is up to date and staff are knowledgeable about

signs to look out for and how to report any potential concerns they may have about a child's welfare. You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are kept in an orderly fashion.

Safeguarding is a high priority at Tiffield. It is an item on the agenda of every staff meeting to keep it at the forefront of everyone's thinking. Pupils say that they are taught how to keep themselves safe, for example when they are using the internet. They have learned about stranger danger and fire safety. Every pupil I spoke with said that they feel safe in school. They could not think of any instances of bullying, but they were confident that if it did happen, an adult would help them.

## **Inspection findings**

- Pupils' books show that teachers plan clear sequences of learning so that pupils can build on the skills, knowledge and understanding they have previously secured.
- In our visit to the key stage 2 class, we saw pupils working well together, building their resilience as they tackled a mathematical reasoning problem together. Pupils were drawing upon their previous learning and listening attentively to each other's views to tackle the problem they had been set.
- Teachers in both classes set work for pupils that engages their interests. In key stage 2, pupils make effective use of mathematical equipment to improve their understanding of multiplication tables. In the key stage 1 class, pupils who were developing their skills in sequencing a story were excited to tell me about the crocodile in the story.
- Pupils read well. Pupils at the early stages of reading make effective use of phonics and other clues, such as looking at the picture to help them make sense of the text. Pupils of different ages say that they enjoy reading.
- Leaders of English and mathematics have a clear understanding of the strengths of their subjects and the current areas for improvement. Subject leaders are responsible for their subjects at schools across the federation. They have a 'subject team' comprising staff in each school who support the monitoring of provision and standards. Leaders' plans for improvement, like the school's improvement plan, do not contain sufficient detail for you and governors to hold them fully to account for improvements at Tiffield Primary School.
- The leader with responsibility for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities works across six primary schools locally. She supports you well with the necessary paperwork and links with external agencies. You and the assistant headteacher keep a close eye on the progress made by pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school's assessment information indicates that these pupils make good progress from their starting points.
- You also keep a close check on the progress that the most-able pupils make. You have provided some opportunities for these pupils to extend their learning, such as the 'university day' at the federation. You are excited that the federation will shortly be taking ownership of a minibus as this will open up the possibilities for further opportunities for pupils of all abilities.

## **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they clearly identify, in the school's plans for improvement, the particular needs of Tiffield Primary School in sufficient detail to enable governors to hold leaders at all levels fully to account for the improvement work they undertake
- the remaining vacancies in the governing body are filled and all governors have the skills and information they require to be able to successfully fulfil their strategic role
- teachers fully implement the recent improvements to the teaching of writing so that pupils of all abilities make the progress of which they are capable.

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

Yours sincerely

Di Mullan  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I held meetings with you and with the leaders with responsibility for English, mathematics and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. I also met with six other members of staff. I met with a representative of the local authority and five governors, including the chair of governors. I spoke with parents as they brought their children to school in the morning and took account of their views through the 15 responses to the online survey, Parent View. I also considered the seven responses to the online staff survey.

I met with a group of six pupils to hear their views and I listened to two pupils read. You and I visited both classes to see the learning that was taking place. I scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's plans for improvement, the school's self-evaluation document, documentation relating to the progress that pupils make and minutes of meetings of the governing body. I examined documents relating to safeguarding.