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14 December 2015

Mrs Julia Pestell
Headteacher
Happisburgh CofE VA Primary School
The Street
Happisburgh
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Dear Mrs Pestell

Short inspection of Happisburgh Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 2 December 2015, 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 May 2012.

This school continues to be good.

Happisburgh is a small school with a huge heart. You, your staff and the governors have built a caring, nurturing environment on a foundation of strong Christian values. As one pupil put it, 'I love this school because teachers are kind and we always learn. I like the fact that we are always challenged and my teacher is the best!' The curriculum is full of exciting and fun activities such as Samba drumming and trips to Norwich Museum to explore what it was like to live in the Stone Age. Pupils also spoke with great enthusiasm about their time in the Dragon's Den presenting their inventions, hopeful of financial backing. The Happisburgh dragons were just as scary as the professionals (they even wore masks with faces of the famous TV dragons) and 'They had good reasons for refusing to back you!' Parents of younger children say, 'Welly Wednesday is brilliant! The children go out in the mud and there's lots of different sensory things and activities. My daughter loves it here and is getting on really well.'

You have created a truly inclusive school where all children are welcome whatever their personal circumstances. You have developed a highly effective approach to managing the behaviour of the neediest children and, although it takes time and patience, they respond well, settle down quickly and make good progress with their learning. Most are catching up with other children of their age.

Pupils say they feel safe at school. There have been occasional issues with bullying but you deal with these as soon as pupils report them to you. There is some name-calling and occasionally pupils like to 'wind-up' other pupils but you are aware of this and staff intervene when necessary. Pupils understand the school system for managing behaviour really well. One pupil said, 'If you make good behaviour choices you don't have a warning or miss golden time.' This works well for most pupils and you have had no exclusions for the last three years.

The majority of parents are very happy with how you run the school and with the good progress their children are making. One parent said, 'I've just had a child start at the high school and he's above average in all his core subjects. This school prepared him really well.' Another parent described the school as 'an amazing place' where 'all the staff are great and children make amazing progress'. A small minority of parents expressed concerns to me and through Parent View (Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents to express their views of the school). However, I found no cause for concern in how the school is led and managed and you were able to explain how you deal with any points that parents raise. All issues are dealt with effectively using your school's procedures and are carefully documented.

A lot has happened to the school since the last inspection. The previous headteacher left very suddenly and the school had no headteacher for nearly four months. You were the Reception Year teacher at the time and, at your request, the local authority provided a temporary headteacher to run the school for a term. You took on the role of acting headteacher in September 2013. Once again you asked for help and this time the local authority provided good support through two advisers. You were appointed as the permanent headteacher in April 2014 and have made a determined and effective start to addressing the issues from the last inspection. You know there is more to do and you have a clear vision, shared by staff and governors, of how to make sure pupils achieve their best and make better than expected progress.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and the governors make sure that pupils are safe at school. Safeguarding processes and procedures are exemplary. Since taking on the role of headteacher you have had a number of highly sensitive matters to deal with and you have done so exceptionally well, sometimes in very difficult circumstances. Your staff are fully aware of what to do if there is a safeguarding concern. Incidents and accidents are recorded clearly and carefully and you take appropriate action to secure pupils' welfare and well-being.

The website contains all the required information. Policies are updated annually and you make sure staff read and understand these policies.

Inspection findings

The 2014 school year was a particularly challenging one for the school. You had no consistent leadership, a number of new staff started at the school, you discovered that assessment at the end of Year 2 was not accurate and the local authority did not intervene soon or strongly enough, initially, to give the support you needed. You also had a smaller than average Year 6 group with a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs. As a result, pupil outcomes in 2014 did not meet the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

In the last 18 months you have transformed the school from one that was rapidly going downhill, in terms of pupil outcomes, to one that has recovered its strong focus on ensuring that all pupils do the best they possibly can. You have built a dedicated and determined staff team members who are highly focused on raising pupil achievement. The 2015 pupil outcomes are much improved from 2014. The school met the government's floor standards and also closed the gap further for disadvantaged pupils with all pupils nationally due to your effective use of the school's pupil premium allocation (additional government funding to support disadvantaged pupils). Current accurate assessment information indicates that in 2016 the school will exceed the floor standards and a higher proportion of pupils will make more progress than similar children of their age. Your track record for ensuring pupils who are looked after by the local authority make good progress from their starting points is outstanding. This is because you make sure that they feel at home from the very beginning, have precisely the type of support they need and have the same opportunities to learn and thrive as every other pupil in the school.

After the last inspection, attendance dropped to well below the national average. You have not been afraid to tackle low attendance even though this has proved very unpopular with a few families. You celebrate good attendance as a whole school but you have also put tough measures in place to deal with persistent absence or those families who take holidays in school time. The local authority has given robust support to you in making sure families are held to account.

You and the staff have done everything possible to make sure parents are fully informed about the new curriculum and are fully involved in their children's learning. You have high attendance at special curriculum events, for example mathematics workshops, and a lot of parents stay in the morning to read with their child or talk about the special learning activities that the teachers prepare for them. Homework is well supported and the special projects have resulted in some amazing family efforts, for example making a model of Stonehenge.

The governing body takes an active role in the school both to support and challenge you. Governors make regular visits, all of which have a clear focus. Recently they have looked at teachers' marking and how this helps pupils to improve their work. They write concise reports about what they have found which are shared with the

appropriate committee and with the full governing body. They expect you to take action on their findings and hold you to account for the performance of staff and pupils. Governors say, 'We do not give the headteacher an easy time!'

You and the staff have a good understanding of how to improve the school further. Your action plans are not as concise as they could be but have rightly identified improving the quality of pupils' presentation and their writing across the curriculum as the next steps for ensuring better outcomes.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- pupils achieve higher standards and make greater progress in writing from their various starting points
- pupils' handwriting is neat and all work, from Reception to Year 6, is well presented.

Yours sincerely

Julie Winyard

Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, meetings were held with you and the staff, governors and a representative from the local authority. In addition, subject leaders for English and mathematics, and parents, pupils and members of the school council were interviewed. A wide range of documentation, including information about pupil outcomes, was scrutinised. All teachers were observed teaching writing and mathematics and pupils' books were scrutinised in lessons and a sample in more detail with subject leaders. Inspectors analysed 28 responses on Parent View and the responses of two members of staff on the online questionnaire for staff.