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Mrs Caroline Aldrich
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Dear Mrs Aldrich

Short inspection of Halam CofE Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 31 October 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 October 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team, including governors, has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection and has ensured that the school continues to improve. High expectations are evident throughout the school and all members of the school community aspire to excellence.

The ethos of the school is underpinned by a clear set of values, which include the 'five finger' values you have recently introduced. These are well understood by pupils and help to make the school a harmonious and inclusive place to learn. Pupils are full of praise for their teachers who 'make learning fun' and help keep them safe. Relationships are strong and pupils have excellent attitudes to their learning. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. Consequently, there is a purposeful atmosphere where everyone strives to do his or her best.

You have built a team that is described by parents as 'friendly, approachable and dedicated' and 'absolutely committed to the welfare of their pupils'. As a result, the personal development and welfare of pupils are real strengths of the school. Staff know that each individual contributes to the success of the team and they value the work of their colleagues. You have ensured that there are opportunities for good quality professional development and training to ensure that staff are well informed and can continue to develop their own skills and knowledge.

The previous inspection recommended that the school should strengthen the

school's partnership with parents. You and the governors have ensured that parents are consulted on a range of matters and you welcome their views as part of the school's strategic decision-making. Your regular newsletters are another example of how you communicate with parents to ensure that they are informed about the day-to-day work of the school.

When you joined the school in September 2016, you quickly identified what the school could do better and put in place a number of strategies to strengthen the quality of the school's work. As a result, standards in reading and writing are improving, but you acknowledge that there is still a need to ensure that all pupils make good progress and achieve the standards of which they are capable. In particular, not enough of the most able pupils achieve the higher standards in reading and writing at the end of key stage 2.

Safeguarding is effective.

The safety and welfare of pupils in the school are of the highest priority. You and your staff know the pupils and their families well and are vigilant in monitoring even the smallest of concerns. As a result, there are very few recorded incidents of poor behaviour.

There are clear procedures for reporting and following up concerns and you ensure that these are recorded thoroughly. Staff receive regular training to make sure that they are aware of the most recent guidance.

Pupils enjoy coming to school and say that, because the school is not too big, everyone gets on well with each other. Bullying is rare and pupils are confident that adults in the school will help them resolve any worries they have.

Attendance is above the national average and there are few cases of persistent absence. The school follows up any absences rigorously.

You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that records are detailed and of good quality. A designated governor carries out regular monitoring activities to ensure that safeguarding requirements are met.

Inspection findings

- Most pupils achieve standards equal to or above those expected for their age by the end of key stage 2. They are well prepared for their next stage in education. However, standards in reading and writing have been weaker than in mathematics and some of the most able pupils have not achieved the higher standards they are capable of. You have clear priorities for improvement in these areas and have planned actions to ensure that standards remain high overall and continue to improve.
- You regularly monitor learning in all classes, checking that teaching is enabling pupils to make good progress. You check that all pupils are given extra challenges in their learning so that they can develop the skills they need to

explain their thinking and use their literacy and mathematical skills in different subjects and contexts. You also check that the most able pupils are working at the standards they are capable of and are on track to achieve the higher standards for their age. Additional challenges ensure that pupils focus on the quality of their work; for example, 'use a thesaurus to improve three of your adjectives'.

- Last academic year, the school's key improvement priority was to improve standards in writing. Assessment information held by the school shows that, in all year groups, a greater proportion of pupils are working at standards expected for their age. Work in pupils' books shows that pupils make good progress throughout the year. There are a number of displays around the school that show different types of writing, by pupils of all ages. Pupils' handwriting is neat, and work is well presented and accurate; pupils clearly take a pride in their work and produce work of a high standard.
- This year, the school is focusing on reading as an improvement priority. You have taken steps to raise the profile of reading throughout the school and have implemented a number of strategies to help pupils improve their reading skills. For example, a new programme for younger pupils is focused on phonics and an intensive reading programme for older pupils is speeding up the progress they are making. Events such as 'book swap day' and a 'sponsored read' encourage pupils to read for pleasure.
- You are currently reviewing the school's curriculum to ensure that it provides both breadth and depth in learning. You are organising each term's work in themes so that there are links in learning between different subjects. These topics have been chosen to spark pupils' curiosity and provide some flexibility to incorporate pupils' interests. Indeed, pupils I spoke with were full of enthusiasm and said that they enjoyed the different aspects of their learning. Because you value pupils' personal development as well as their academic achievement, you are making sure that there are opportunities beyond their lessons to experience a wide range of sports and other activities, including astronomy club and instrumental tuition. Assemblies include additional themes such as 'Human Rights Day' and 'Black History Week'. As a result, pupils are thoughtful and reflective, showing respect and tolerance for others.
- As the curriculum is being revised, the most up-to-date information is not available on the school website. My review of the website prior to the inspection noted that some of the required information is not up to date, specifically, information about the pupil premium funding and the physical education and sports premium. I discussed this with you during the inspection.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- there is an increase in the proportion of pupils achieving the higher standards in reading and writing at the end of key stage 2
- the school's website is fully up to date and meets the requirements set out for

the publication of information.

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

Yours sincerely

Jane Salt
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I visited all classes with you to observe learning. I reviewed a selection of pupils' books to consider the standard of work and progress being made. I talked with a group of pupils and listened to some pupils read. I took into account the 37 responses to the pupils' online questionnaire.

I held meetings with you and I met with four members of the governing body. I had a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. I also met with members of staff. There were no responses to the online staff questionnaire.

I reviewed a range of the school's documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and the school improvement plan. I spoke to a number of parents informally at the start of the day and took into account the 27 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire.