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Ms Andrea Curtis  
Headteacher  
Nicholas Hawksmoor Primary School  
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Dear Ms Curtis

### **Short inspection of Nicholas Hawksmoor Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 13 June 2018, 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 December 2014.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in specific areas. This may indicate that the school has improved significantly overall. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

Since the last inspection, you have built effectively on the school's many strengths. You have created a culture at Nicholas Hawksmoor Primary School which places the pupils at the heart of everything the school does and the school at the heart of the community it serves. You are an inspirational and determined leader. You recognised and promptly implemented improvements to raise pupils' achievements. You have successfully strengthened the capacity of the leadership team. Staff morale is very high, as shown by the staff survey completed during the inspection. All staff agreed or strongly agreed that they feel proud to be a member of staff at the school. All staff are committed to doing their best for the pupils. This is because you encourage them to take responsibility for their work, develop their expertise and use their professional judgement. They feel trusted and supported by you and other leaders to do this. Exceptional practice in the school is celebrated and shared widely with other schools.

You, the staff and the governors are keen for the school to be an important part of the local and wider community. You have introduced a citizenship programme that reflects the principles of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. Pupils

enthusiastically organise and run events to raise money for local and national charities. They are proud of their collaboration with the local Rotary Club and the experience of civic duty it provides. Older pupils are committed to regularly helping out at a local residential home. Recently, pupils learned about the impact of plastic on the environment. They used their knowledge of using the internet to operate a drone to collect waste plastic as part of a 'beach clean' project. Pupils are taught about different faiths and religions, and show understanding and acceptance of these. They understand and appreciate diversity. Pupils visit places of worship, including the local church and a mosque in Leicester, and they learn about different cultures through the curriculum. The school council is appreciated for the work it does to represent the views of pupils and the improvements it has introduced, such as the 'buddy benches'. Pupils are kind and caring. They play and learn happily together.

Parents who expressed their views through the online survey, Parent View, or who spoke with me, were full of praise for the way in which their children are looked after. One parent's comment was typical of many, 'My child is really happy and, to me, that's really important.' Parents are welcomed into the school on a regular basis to look at their children's work to see how well they are improving. The school is working towards the Artsmark Platinum award and pupils are excited about showing off their highly creative artwork.

Governors have a range of relevant skills and experience to support the work of the school. They have a thorough understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Governors are closely involved with the school and make regular visits to check on the school's work towards meeting its priorities. They understand the strengths and areas for development well. They ensure that leaders are held to account for the standard of education at the school and stay focused on the key priorities for improvement.

At the last inspection, inspectors asked you to ensure that feedback given to pupils about their work provides them with a clear indication of what they need to do to improve. You have responded successfully to this by implementing a whole-school policy which is consistently applied by staff and pupils.

Inspectors also asked you to improve achievement in writing in key stage 2 so that it was as good as in reading and mathematics. Inspectors challenged leaders to improve opportunities for pupils to write at length in different subjects. We saw in pupils' books and in work on display throughout the school that teachers plan lessons to provide a wide range of opportunities for independent and extended writing in a range of subjects. We saw well-crafted examples of writing using ambitious vocabulary and grammar. Pupils take pride in their work.

A previously identified area for development was the progress of a small number of the lower ability pupils not matching their capability. Performance information shows that these pupils make secure progress. Teachers and leaders know the pupils well and are aware of the various needs of pupils in each class. Teachers plan their lessons accordingly and provide additional support or challenge as necessary.

We saw in pupils' books the improvements and progress they make over time and the opportunities that they have to reflect on their learning.

Your school leads a multi-academy trust and you are developing a programme of school improvement with other member schools. As a result, staff have many opportunities both to share and to gain expertise. Your accurate assessment of what the school does well and what it still needs to develop ensures that this arrangement is helping Nicholas Hawksmoor Primary go from strength to strength.

You have taken effective action to identify and tackle the areas for improvement since the last inspection. However, you are not complacent and constantly want to ensure further improvements for the pupils. For example, you have introduced in key stage 2 a reading scheme to develop pupils' skills in deeper analysis of texts and a mathematics scheme in key stage 1 and key stage 2 to develop pupils' reasoning skills, as your next step.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You collaborate with other schools, including a secondary school, to ensure that the common record system that exists contributes well to safeguarding effectiveness. The school administrator ensures that all the appropriate checks on staff, volunteers and visitors are made to support the safety of the school and the pupils and to meet statutory requirements. Your record keeping is very well organised and records are kept securely. Policies are reviewed and updated regularly.

Leaders, including members of the governing body, maintain a robust safeguarding culture across the school. You have made sure that all staff have received timely and up-to-date training in child protection. Four members of staff have completed training to be designated leads of safeguarding. Checks to ensure that staff are suitable to work with children are comprehensive and kept securely. Members of the governing body make thorough checks on all safeguarding practices.

High-quality, detailed records show that you manage concerns swiftly and understand the procedures for referring pupils to other agencies where there is concern.

Pupils feel safe at the school and are confident that their concerns are quickly dealt with by staff. They are aware of potential dangers; for example, those posed by the internet and by local issues. Pupils understand the forms that bullying can take and, while they say bullying is rare, they are confident that it would be dealt with quickly and effectively should it occur. They understand how the school keeps them safe and this view is supported by most parents spoken with, and most of those who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View.

## Inspection findings

- You have an accurate view of the strengths and areas for improvement across the school. Together with your leadership team, you undertake a rigorous schedule of monitoring the quality of teaching and learning and of the progress that pupils are making. The forging of close links with other schools, including those within the trust, has enabled your staff to share good practice and to work alongside colleagues. In this way, they undertake training, they moderate their judgements, and ensure that they are accurate in their assessments of pupils' work. This is enabling you to bring about improvements in all aspects of the curriculum and in school life.
- You have an accurate view of the effectiveness of teaching, learning and assessment. Published information shows that the proportion of children that reach a good level of development is above the national average. School information indicates that this looks set to continue this year. Phonics teaching is strong. Published information shows that pupils do well when compared with national averages in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stages 1 and 2.
- A small number of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and those who are middle attainers, make average progress, rather than the above-average progress made by many of their peers. Leaders have been quick to act. The school has reviewed the teaching of reading across the school. You have taken swift action to identify an appropriate approach to the teaching of reading which puts emphasis on developing pupils' skills to read with greater depth of understanding. Pupils use a range of high-quality texts to support their reading and their skills are consistently good. You recognise that further refinement in the approach is needed to ensure that pupils' analytical skills are fully developed.
- You have reviewed the teaching of mathematics across the school. An appropriate approach to the teaching of mathematics has been implemented. Visits to lessons and a review of work in pupils' books showed that teaching is consistently of a high quality. Adults use questions well to check and probe pupils' understanding during lessons. They adapt teaching accordingly to add support or extra challenge. Teachers' subject knowledge is strong. As a result, pupils are becoming more fluent when working with numbers and are confident when asked to find ways of solving problems. Teachers use contexts to give meaning and purpose to the learning. In one lesson, pupils spoke enthusiastically about learning the relevance of mathematics in the wider world. One pupil explained how architects use mathematics to work out the properties of angles in designing a building. Pupils are well supported by well-trained support staff. However, you recognise that further refinement is needed to ensure that the new approach is fully embedded and successfully improving pupils' reasoning skills.
- The school uses its funding well to meet the needs of the pupils, and evaluates the impact that this has on the progress that they make. In addition, the school responds quickly to address social and emotional difficulties that often lead to underachievement. For example, teachers and leaders have devised recovery lessons for pupils who are falling behind.

- Leaders have been quick to identify areas for developing the quality of writing skills. You have made a range of changes to improve writing. This includes ensuring that specific skills are regularly taught and practised. Pupils have frequent opportunities and an enthusiasm for writing. Their work in books, on display and in lessons shows that their writing across a range of subjects is of high quality.
- In the Nursery and Reception classes, teachers provide a wide range of well-planned tasks for children in mathematics, writing and speaking and listening. The learning environment is rich and stimulating. Staff use every moment of the school day to develop children's learning. For example, children use their 'Morning Book' to practise writing and sounds at the beginning of every day. Children's outcomes are strong within early years.
- In early years, adults take care to ensure that children's interests guide their learning across the curriculum. For example, the 'Wishing Well' initiative generates a theme each week to which parents and carers are encouraged to contribute ideas. The theme at the time of this inspection was the seaside and children were writing messages to put in a bottle. The organisation of the classrooms and outdoor spaces is effective in encouraging the children to work and play together. Adults take care to ensure that activities have different levels of challenge to match the children's different abilities. The result is that many children gain skills in reading, writing and numeracy that are higher than those typically expected.
- Published information shows that attendance overall is above the national average. You, and the governing body, monitor pupils' attendance very closely and you have implemented a number of successful strategies to reduce the number of persistent absences. You have directed funds effectively to provide targeted support to enable pupils to improve their attendance.
- The school's curriculum is effective in promoting pupils' personal development. Pupils appreciate and enjoy the opportunities that the school provides in academic subjects and in sports and the arts. Teachers and leaders have high expectations of, and are ambitious for the children. The work on display, in particular the extensive work presented on a recent study of Shakespeare's 'The Tempest', is of high quality. You are ensuring that the curriculum provides plenty of opportunities for pupils to learn about the world around them. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they further refine the recently introduced strategies to fully develop pupils' analytical and reasoning skills in reading and mathematics so that all groups of pupils make the progress of which they may be capable.

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

Yours sincerely

Elizabeth Moore  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During this inspection, I met with you to discuss the school's self-evaluation and my key lines of enquiry. I met with a group of governors, including the chair of the multi-academy trust. I met with subject leaders responsible for English, mathematics, early years, pupil premium, special educational needs and assessment. I held a discussion with a representative of the local authority. I spoke with pupils during a group discussion, and informally during lessons. I observed the conduct of pupils around and outside the school. I spoke with parents at the start of the school day. I visited all classes in the school, many with you, and sampled pupils' books. In addition, I checked the school's safeguarding arrangements and records, including the school's record of recruitment checks on staff. I evaluated the school's documentation about pupils' achievement, planning for improvement and attendance. I took account of 183 responses to the Parent View online survey, including free-text responses. I also took account of the 17 responses to the pupil survey and the 36 responses to the staff survey issued during the inspection.