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Mrs Kate Hodson  
Ruskington Chestnut Street Church of England Academy  
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Dear Mrs Hodson

### **Short inspection of Ruskington Chestnut Street Church of England Academy**

Following my visit to the school on 17 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 May 2013.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since that time, there have been substantial changes in leadership, staffing and governance. Nearly all teaching staff and members of the local governing body have changed. Since the last inspection, the school has joined the Lincoln Anglican Academy Trust. The school now has a stable staffing structure and a new chair of the local governing body.

Pupils enjoy coming to your school. They are proud of their school, and show respect for each other and their teachers. From their entry in the early years, routines are quickly established. Relationships are very positive. Pupils have a positive attitude to learning and apply themselves well to their work. Behaviour is good and pupils conduct themselves very well throughout the school day. Your school has a caring ethos and pupils show respect for each other and adults.

You lead the school with confidence. Many parents I spoke with commented on positive changes in the school. Since your appointment to the post of executive headteacher in June 2017, you have rapidly established an effective senior leadership team. You, the new head of school and the assistant headteacher have swiftly introduced, or are further developing, a wide range of initiatives which are improving standards in the school. You and your senior leaders work as a cohesive team and, together with staff, are successfully tackling many of the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. You recognise that there is still work

to be done, but your clear-sighted vision and ambition for the school means that lost ground due to staff turnover has rapidly been made up.

Leaders provide staff with focused feedback to improve the quality of learning and teaching. Teachers clearly share objectives for learning in lessons, and often provide prompts to help pupils understand what is expected in their work. This is effective, although sometimes pupils are not clear on the purpose of what they are learning. Leaders have recently revised the school's phonics programme, reviewed approaches to planning lessons and improved systems for checking pupils' progress. Staff introduced a new approach to promoting good reading skills in key stage 2 and developed a thematic curriculum to promote pupils' interest and curiosity. Pupils made junk-model 'time machines', for example, as a stimulus for writing. Leaders introduced a 'mastery' based approach for mathematics to deepen pupils' understanding of mathematical concepts and increase their progress.

The impact of the work to raise standards in English was evident in pupils' attainment and progress at the end of 2017. Pupils often write at length and there was evidence of some improvement in handwriting. The quality of pupils' writing, however, is sometimes let down by poor presentation or inaccurate spelling, grammar and punctuation. Teachers' expectations of pupils are not consistently high. You, your leaders and staff are aware of this.

Leaders' actions to improve standards in mathematics were not strongly evident in pupils' attainment and progress at the end of key stages 1 and 2 last year. Nonetheless, attainment did improve. While there are inconsistencies, the majority of pupils are making good progress and this is improving. The work of current pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, shows that teachers regularly provide pupils with opportunities to practise their problem solving and reasoning skills. Not all pupils, however, are as secure as they should be because teachers do not consistently match work well to their needs.

Leaders and those responsible for governance have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. You have ensured that staff are clear on how well pupils are doing in their classes. Your evaluation of the school's performance is accurate and improvement plans focus on relevant actions to raise standards. Plans do not, however, focus sharply enough on specific targets for accelerating pupils' progress, particularly for the most able and disadvantaged pupils. While improving, the progress and attainment of these groups is still too inconsistent.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

There is a strong culture of safeguarding. Pupils spoke with confidence about how the school teaches them to keep themselves safe, for example when online, or about the dangers of railway lines, an aspect particularly relevant to the local area. Pupils say teachers respond to any concerns that they have and that bullying is very rare. Many of the parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, however, did not have the view that the school dealt with bullying effectively.

I could find no evidence to support this. Pupils told me how they would use a 'worry box' or speak to a teacher if they were worried. Leaders' records and recording of instances of poor behaviour or concerns relating to bullying are thorough.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Records are detailed and of high quality. Systems and procedures for recording concerns are rigorous and detail the actions staff have taken to address them. Leaders take timely action where appropriate and they are tenacious in seeking external support where this is required. The school's single central record is thorough and recruitment processes are also rigorous.

### **Inspection findings**

- At the end of the last academic year, the proportion of children in the early years who attained a good level of development improved compared to the previous year and was above the national average. The proportion of pupils meeting the required standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check also improved and was above the national average. The attainment of pupils at the end of key stage 1 for reading, writing and mathematics improved compared to the previous year. However, attainment was still below that seen nationally.
- Leaders focused attention on improving standards in reading and writing last year. As a result, at the end of key stage 2, pupils' progress and attainment improved. However, progress in mathematics was below the national average. The progress of disadvantaged pupils overall was too low. These are areas that leaders and those responsible for governance are working to improve.
- Pupils' current work shows the impact of the work of leaders and staff to bring about improvements. Pupils often produce work of a good standard in writing, and there is evidence of many pupils making good progress. Teachers, however, have inconsistent expectations of the quality of pupils' presentation of their work in a range of subjects. Standards of spelling, grammar and punctuation are inconsistent and this slows some pupils' progress in writing.
- Teachers often use visual imagery and apparatus well to develop pupils' mathematical understanding. Pupils' work shows the impact of leaders' and staff's work to promote pupils' mastery of mathematical ideas. Pupils have increasingly frequent opportunities to solve problems and develop their reasoning skills. However, some pupils are not yet proficient in solving problems independently and demonstrating their reasoning skills.
- Attendance for all pupils was below the national average at the end of 2017, and particularly so for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders are aware of this and, with the child and family support worker, work with families to improve attendance. Current information shows that the attendance of disadvantaged pupils has improved, and leaders are committed to improve further, overall rates of attendance. This is an area of continuing focus.
- The trust and local governing body are committed to further improving the school. They have a good overall understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They are not, however, as stringent as they could be in holding the school to account for the progress of different groups of pupils,

including the use of the pupil premium to ensure that disadvantaged pupils make accelerated progress.

- Leaders' processes for managing the performance of teachers and regular meetings to review the progress of pupils in each class are robust and help to drive improvement. Teachers have a clear understanding of the abilities and learning needs of the pupils in their class and leaders review the progress of pupils carefully.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- self-evaluation and improvement plans focus more sharply on specific targets and actions to accelerate pupils' progress, particularly the most able and disadvantaged pupils
- all teachers have high expectations in all subjects of the accuracy of pupils' spelling, grammar and punctuation and quality of presentation of their work
- all teachers equip pupils with the skills they need to be effective problem solvers in mathematics so that more pupils achieve at greater depth.

I am copying this letter to the chief executive officer of the academy trust, the director of education for the diocese of Lincoln, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Lincolnshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

John Lawson  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met you, the head of school and the assistant headteacher and shared with you my six key lines of enquiry. I met with the chief executive officer of the academy trust, a trust school effectiveness adviser and the chair of the local governing body. I also met with pupils from Year 6 and parents at the start of the school day. I considered the 33 responses for 2017–18 from Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. We visited all classes, spending a short time in each, and looked at a sample of pupils' work. I viewed a range of documents, including the school's evaluation of its own performance, the school's plans for improvement, information about pupils' attainment and progress, attendance and the management of teachers' performance. I looked at information about how the pupil premium is used and a number of policy documents, including those relating to safeguarding.