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Mr Mark Freeman  
Headteacher  
St Michael's Church of England Primary School, Stoke Gifford  
Ratcliffe Drive  
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Bristol  
BS34 8SG

Dear Mr Freeman

### **Short inspection of St Michael's Church of England Primary School, Stoke Gifford**

Following my visit to the school on 13 September 2016 with Matthew Cottrell, Ofsted Inspector, 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 March 2012.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

You, as headteacher, provide experienced, good-quality leadership. You have an accurate understanding of the strengths of the school and you are fully aware of the areas that still require development. School leaders are not complacent, despite the school being judged to be good at its last inspection. You are committed to tackling current areas for improvement and ensuring that the school goes from strength to strength. You have successfully responded to the last inspection's findings so that, consequently, teaching is of a higher quality and the curriculum is far more engaging for pupils.

You are well supported by governors and other staff in the school. This is because you recognise the importance of developing leadership in others. Your approach is measured and supportive. You also have high expectations of your staff. As a result, you are skilled at 'growing' effective leaders and delegating leadership throughout the school. Consequently, staff expertise continues to grow and the robust systems that are in place to secure high-quality teaching, behaviour and welfare are managed effectively.

Leaders and governors have created a culture in the school that celebrates learning across the range of subjects in the curriculum. You want learning to be fun,

stimulating and diverse across a range of disciplines. It is important to you that pupils have a well-rounded education that gives them a good grounding in the arts, humanities and sciences as well as literacy and numeracy. The curriculum is a strength of the school. As a result, the school atmosphere is vibrant and dynamic. Pupils are happy and enjoy their learning. As one pupil told me, 'We have a good mix of lessons every day. The teachers teach very well and make the lessons fun.'

Staff have high expectations of all pupils, regardless of their background or ability. These expectations, in conjunction with good-quality teaching, have enabled pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, to achieve well over time by the time they leave the school. Leaders are aware of the need to ensure that disadvantaged pupils make better progress at key stage 1, however, and have acted accordingly. The work in pupils' books indicates that strategies to improve the progress of these pupils are effective. Leaders are also aware that more needs to be done to ensure that pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make better progress in writing in certain year groups.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Children are kept safe in this school. Very positive relationships exist between staff and pupils. If pupils are worried, they know that they can share their concerns with staff, and they will be listened to and their concerns acted on. This understanding contributes to the open, reassuring and respectful culture of the school so that pupils report that they feel safe. A very high proportion of parents who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, also stated that the school kept pupils safe.

Staff are clear about the procedures to follow should a pupil make a disclosure. They have been trained to recognise when children are at risk of harm, and the steps to take to ensure their safety. Checks to establish the suitability of staff to work with children are up to date and fit for purpose. Staff and governors with responsibility for recruitment have had the necessary training to ensure that new staff joining the school are suitable.

Pupils are taught effectively how to keep themselves safe online. For example, they know that they should not share personal details with strangers.

### **Inspection findings**

- Governors provide effective leadership because they support and challenge you and other leaders in equal measure. They are fully familiar with your evaluation of the school's effectiveness, so that they are clear about the school's strengths and areas to improve. They have a good understanding of pupils' achievement, including that of groups such as disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
- You benefit from collaboration with other local schools. This partnership provides you with the opportunity to share your leadership experience with other new headteachers, which, in turn, develops your own expertise. Conversely, you

welcome ideas and advice from practitioners outside of the school because you continually strive to be better. This contributes to the school's culture of openness and high expectations.

- Teaching is improving in the school. This is because activities to monitor the quality of teaching are linked effectively to the appraisal process. In addition, leaders have implemented training programmes that are successfully developing the expertise of staff at different stages of their careers. For instance, the 'outstanding teacher' programme is helping to maximise the potential of the most talented staff.
- Teachers use their growing expertise to plan work and activities that meet the needs of pupils effectively. Teaching assistants are carefully deployed, as are resources, to help the pupils who will benefit most to make comparable progress with their peers. Work in pupils' books shows that the most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, are provided with stimulating themes, ideas and questions to consider. They are encouraged to write in depth across a range of subjects and they are provided with extension activities to advance their thinking further.
- It is apparent from the work produced by pupils with SEND, and their engagement with learning in class, that staff have the same high expectations of these pupils as for all others. They take pride in the presentation of their work. For example, pupils take care to ensure that their handwriting is neat and joined up. Their work indicates clear progression in learning over time. However, pupils in some year groups are not yet making progress in their writing that is comparable with their peers. Leaders are aware of this issue and are acting to address it. For example, an early speech and language assessment has been introduced recently to ensure that appropriate intervention takes place as early as possible.
- The school is using the additional funding it receives effectively to support the progress of disadvantaged pupils. For example, teachers are being deployed to work with small groups of pupils in lessons, alongside the main classroom teacher, so that they make more rapid progress. In addition, teaching assistants are working regularly and often with targeted pupils who do not read much at home. This intervention is helping to rapidly improve pupils' reading skills.
- Leaders have acted on findings in the last inspection to develop a broader, more interesting curriculum that fires the imagination of pupils. It has been designed with pupils' interests in mind and champions all subjects equally. Another important principle underpinning the curriculum is that skills and knowledge used in one subject should be transferable to another. As a result, pupils apply their improving literacy skills to good effect in a range of subjects.
- Pupils develop good mathematics calculation skills. However, they are not provided with enough opportunities to practise problem solving or to develop mathematical reasoning.
- Overall attendance is above average because pupils enjoy coming to school. Attendance for some disadvantaged pupils, however, is below average. Leaders have taken action to address this and there has been some improvement. For example, school leaders, the attendance officer and the family support worker are being proactive in their efforts to work with families and agencies such as social services. Further work remains to be done, however, for attendance figures to reach the national average.

- The overwhelming majority of parents who responded to the online questionnaire would recommend the school. Most respondents are highly positive about the quality of leadership, teaching and behaviour. They state that their children are happy to come to school and that they make good progress.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils are given more opportunities to develop mathematical reasoning and problem solving to complement their calculation skills
- absence is further reduced for disadvantaged pupils so that it is at least in line with the national average
- pupils with special educational needs and disabilities make comparable progress with their peers in writing across all year groups.

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

Yours sincerely

Steve Smith  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During this inspection inspectors spoke to you, pupils, representatives of the governing body, a representative from the local authority and leaders responsible for safeguarding, special educational needs and disadvantaged pupils.

Senior leaders and inspectors made visits to lessons to observe pupils' attitudes to learning, and inspectors also scrutinised work in pupils' books.

A range of documentary evidence was considered, which included the school's self-evaluation, the school improvement plan, current pupil progress information, governors' minutes, reports from the school improvement partner, and attendance, bullying and safeguarding records.