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Curtis Sweetingham
Headteacher
St John's CofE Primary School
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Dear Mr Sweetingham

Short inspection of St John's C of E Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 9 November 2016, 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 January 2012.

This school continues to be good.

You and your leadership team have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since your appointment in September 2015 the school has been through a period of significant change. A review of governance led to some changes in membership. Alongside your leadership, this new structure has been instrumental in securing rapid school development, including an effective financial recovery programme together with improvements to teaching and learning.

The school has successfully dealt with the areas for improvement from the previous inspection. Provisional results for 2016 suggest that the number of children achieving a good level of development by the end of their Reception Year was well above the national average. The proportion of pupils who reached the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check is above average and improving. The progress of pupils in reading and mathematics is swift across key stage 2. Provisional assessment results in 2016 suggest that Year 6 pupils' progress in writing was not as consistently brisk. You are rightly ambitious to increase rates of progress in writing for the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, and boys.

You and the leadership team quickly set out high aspirations for teaching and learning. Following a well-managed period of consultation, you have relaunched the school's mission statement and reorganised staffing arrangements. As a result, staff morale is high. Staff are committed to the vision of high expectations for pupils'

outcomes. Parents and carers support the changes you have made and can see how these are improving their children's experiences at school.

Your prompt actions put in place a new reading programme that has resulted in improvements in reading progress across the school. Leaders recognised that resources needed enhancement to engage the interest of boys. Pupils now access quality texts in a well-stocked library and their enjoyment of reading has increased. Well-planned guided reading lessons help most pupils develop the skills they need to improve their writing. Consequently, the progress of boys currently at the school in reading and writing is improving and differences between the performance of boys and girls are reducing rapidly.

Pupils have a wide variety of opportunities to write for real purposes and deepen their understanding of high-quality writing strategies. For example, pupil learning ambassadors wrote detailed letters outlining the features of outstanding learning. You now draw upon pupils' suggestions to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment further.

Good use of pupil premium funding means that well-deployed and skilled teaching assistants support pupils' learning effectively. Teachers know how well different groups of pupils achieve. They are clear how they are meeting the needs of different groups of pupils. As a result, disadvantaged pupils, including the most able, make better progress than previously in reading and writing across the school. Teachers' feedback provides challenge and helpful comments to improve pupils' work. Pupils demonstrate the school's ethos of developing resilience in their responses by completing challenges set by staff.

Members of the middle leadership team are developing their role in driving improvements to pupils' outcomes. You and the deputy headteacher support them well. While they demonstrate good capacity, you agreed that they still need time to embed their work and improve teaching and learning further in their areas of responsibility.

Governors have successfully rallied together in a period of rapid change to keep the strategic direction of the school on course. A thorough review of governance enabled governors to enhance the skills of the whole governing body and hold school leaders to account effectively. They have also been able to offer vigorous challenge because they have a very good knowledge of the school's performance. They support the school's leadership team when making difficult decisions, including during the recent staffing restructure. Governors regularly seek parents' views through regular 'drop in sessions'. They have managed parents' expectations well throughout the changes introduced since the last inspection.

Parents are very supportive of the school. They appreciate the changes to improve the school's security and know that leaders work hard to keep their children safe and secure. They get regular information about how well their children make progress at school. Parents say that their children enjoy coming to school and talk about their learning enthusiastically.

Pupils are very friendly and eager to share their learning. They are hardworking and show a real pride in their school work. They know how to keep safe and how to assess risks when using technology. Pupils are very proud to be at the school and their attitudes to learning are very good.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors ensure that safeguarding is at the heart of the school's work. Highly detailed records are routinely updated. Leaders are extremely rigorous in checking staff's suitability to work with children. Governors are vigilant in monitoring the school's logs and have a very good knowledge of their statutory responsibilities. Training is up to date. Recent training for staff has included aspects such as female genital mutilation, child sexual exploitation and recognising when pupils may be drawn into situations of harm, including when online. As a result, staff are confident in using the school's systems to raise concerns.

The school supports vulnerable pupils very well. Early identification of needs ensures that the right support is provided for pupils. These pupils make good progress when compared with other pupils with similar starting points. Leaders know the pupils very well. They use accurate assessment information to put interventions in place that have a positive impact on pupils' outcomes.

Inspection findings

- You and other school leaders, including governors, have a clear strategic vision for raising standards further. Accurate self-evaluation leads to ambitious plans for further school improvement. The whole school community knows and understands the school's priorities over the coming year because of the transparent way you work with staff and parents.
- Pupils' progress is monitored regularly and teachers use assessment information effectively to plan challenging and stimulating lessons. Teaching assistants add value to pupils' learning and work in effective partnership with teachers. As a result, teaching stretches and challenges pupils in all classes and ensures good outcomes across the curriculum.
- The school is developing as a 'reading school'. Children make a good start to reading in the early years. Pupils' reading skills develop very well as they move up through the school. Phonics teaching is very effective and the new teaching programme produced improved results in the Year 1 phonics screening check in 2016. The teaching of reading across the school deepens pupils' understanding of challenging texts. As a consequence, pupils are confident and fluent readers and the historic difference in boys' and girls' outcomes in reading is diminishing.
- The school is successfully addressing the priority to improve outcomes for most-able pupils. This group of self-motivated learners use teachers' feedback to good effect and rise to the challenges teachers set in writing. Many have shown that they are able to write detailed and well-constructed application letters and speeches for positions of responsibility. Pupils' current books show that an increasing number of the most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, make rapid progress.

- The governors carry out their responsibilities diligently. They monitor the school's spending of the pupil premium to ensure that it successfully diminishes the difference between the progress of disadvantaged pupils, including the most able disadvantaged, and other pupils with the same starting points. Leaders ensure that the high-quality curriculum meets pupils' needs. This means that teaching secures good progress and pupils are on track to meet age-related expectations.
- The professional relationships between the staff and pupils are a real strength of the school. Pupils respect each other and the adults who work with them. Teachers successfully create an atmosphere that promotes a love of learning in classrooms, leading to lessons that are enjoyable. This results in good outcomes for pupils.
- A well-planned, broad and balanced curriculum enhances the school's Christian ethos. The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development very well. The school's ambitious ethos prepares them well for life in modern Britain. For example, pupils write manifestos and vote for their choice of house captain.
- The middle leaders are in the early stages of developing their role in improving pupils' outcomes. They are enthusiastic and ready to take on more responsibility. They appreciate the support you give them and are models of good practice for less experienced teachers.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- middle leaders, who are new to post, develop their skills for improving pupils' outcomes in their areas of responsibility.

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

Yours sincerely

Sara Morgan
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

The inspector agreed to prioritise the following areas with the school at the start of the inspection:

- the effectiveness of safeguarding in the school
- the action taken to address the weaker writing profile, in particular for boys and most-able pupils
- the use of pupil premium funding to diminish differences between most-able

disadvantaged pupils and others with the same starting points

- how effectively the new middle leaders have an impact on improving pupils' outcomes.

The inspector carried out the following activities to explore these areas during the inspection:

- met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and middle leaders
- held meetings with members of the governing body
- held a discussion with a representative from the local authority
- heard pupils read from Years 2 to 6
- scrutinised school documents, including, safeguarding records, policies and procedures, the single central record of pre-employment checks, and assessment information
- visited lessons across the school with the headteacher and the deputy headteacher
- held informal discussions with parents at the start of the school day
- considered 91 parent responses to Parent View and 27 responses to the online survey for staff.