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Ms Nicole Cooper  
Headteacher  
St Laurence Church of England (A) School  
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Dear Ms Cooper

### **Short inspection of St Laurence Church of England (A) School**

Following my visit to the school on 25 January 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. You have developed a team that enjoys working together to achieve the best for the pupils and families of St Laurence and the local community. Your self-evaluation is accurate and you know which aspects of the school require further improvement. The school development plan addresses these and the school is well placed to continue to improve. Through nurturing individuals and supporting parents, you ensure that all pupils meet their full potential. As a result, pupils leave the school ready for the next stage of education.

Parents describe the school as a happy and community-spirited place. They comment enthusiastically on the school's inclusivity, particularly for pupils who join midway through the year. Pupils echo this and describe their school as 'amazing' with 'wonderful teachers'. In classrooms, pupils concentrate and work hard. They are keen to talk about their learning and are proud of their achievements. Pupils in different classes were keen to show me their Gruffalo house, their 'best' writing and their cave paintings. They are supportive of each other's learning, helping their friends to improve by discussing work.

At the time of the previous inspection, leaders were asked to raise attainment in writing and accelerate progress in mathematics. At the end of key stage 2 in 2016, the proportion of pupils who met the standard for writing and mathematics was above that seen nationally. English, punctuation, grammar and spelling test scores

were also above the national average for all groups of pupils. However, in 2016, too few key stage 1 pupils met the expected standard for their age in reading, writing and mathematics. The school's middle leaders have taken swift action and current information shows that these pupils are beginning to catch up.

Information on pupils' performance is gathered more regularly and is discussed by leaders and staff. Middle leaders work with other local schools to check the accuracy of their assessments of pupils' learning. This year, more pupils are on track to achieve the standards expected for their age. In key stage 1, pupils are building well on the solid foundation of knowledge and skills they developed in the early years. Consequently, more pupils are on track to reach the expectations for their age. However, the most able are not always challenged fully in mathematics and writing.

Governors are enthusiastic and keen to play their part in improving the school. Recent changes are beginning to increase governors' capacity to hold leaders to account. For example, new governors have undertaken appropriate training. This has helped them to begin to develop their understanding of assessment information. However, this work is at a very early stage and further development is needed.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders make sure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. The school's safeguarding policy is compliant with statutory requirements. A robust training programme ensures that staff and governors are kept up to date with the latest guidance. Consequently, adults are knowledgeable about how to keep pupils safe. Although all appropriate employment checks are completed, not all are recorded systematically. This oversight was addressed during my visit, demonstrating leaders' and administrators' commitment to meeting statutory requirements.

The designated safeguarding lead works closely with other agencies to ensure that pupils and their families are supported sensitively. Leaders keep careful records of this work. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe and healthy. They know who to talk to if they are worried or concerned. Caring well for pupils is a priority in the life of the school. During the inspection, leaders arranged for pupils who feel apprehensive from time to time to meet the inspection team. Such timely action reduces the anxiety that some pupils may feel.

Attendance is good for all groups of pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, disadvantaged pupils and children who are looked after. A recent pupil survey shows that pupils like school, feel safe and enjoy 'fun' lessons.

### **Inspection findings**

- During my visit, together with the headteacher, I looked closely at specific aspects of the school's provision including: safeguarding arrangements; the

effectiveness of leadership; the achievement of pupils in key stage 1 and the effectiveness of phonics teaching. Leaders have a good understanding of the strengths of the school and the priorities for improvement. They plan effectively to tackle weaknesses, supporting and challenging staff through training and setting challenging targets. Staff work well together to improve outcomes for pupils.

- The headteacher has quickly begun to address the dip in standards at the end of key stage 1 in 2016. The English leader has analysed pupils' performance carefully and, alongside the special educational needs coordinator, has put in place interventions to accelerate the progress of those pupils who were previously not meeting expectations. Evidence in books shows that this work is already beginning to speed up pupils' progress.
- Pupils in Year 1, particularly those of average ability, build well on their early mathematics skills. Pupils develop their grasp of place value quickly, applying their understanding to solve simple word problems confidently. However, some of the most able pupils in key stage 1 are making slower progress in mathematics as teachers do not always plan tasks that offer sufficient challenge.
- Governors have scrutinised pupils' performance in key stage 2, producing a helpful report which recognises and celebrates the above-average progress and attainment of last year's Year 6 pupils. The report also outlines steps taken to promote pupils' progress in the future. Governors have recently formed a 'data committee' to look more closely at current pupils' performance. However, this group has not yet considered the more pressing priority of raising standards in key stage 1, particularly for the most able pupils.
- Although a small proportion of the school, disadvantaged pupils make similar progress to their peers. Leaders produce carefully researched policies and documents and can talk knowledgeably about the impact of the pupil premium. However, this information is not available to parents on the school's website.
- Carefully planned tasks in English provide a baseline for assessment and enable the teachers and pupils to look back on progress made. Pupils in upper key stage 2 could demonstrate how editing and review had added greater depth to their writing.
- The teaching of spelling and phonics throughout the school is improving. Dedicated time to practise key skills has had a positive effect on the quality of pupils' spelling. Assessment information shows that key stage 2 spelling scores are above the national average for all groups. The leadership team have supported teachers in the teaching of phonics and have put training in place. Standards are rising. Most key stage 1 pupils who did not reach the required phonics standard at the end of Year 1 catch up by the end of Year 2.
- In individually chosen activities, early years children choose phonic-based activities with enthusiasm. During the inspection, children were able to sound out words confidently, demonstrating a good grasp of the sound of the day, 'ar'. Focused questioning from adults elicits children's thorough understanding of words. Children get off to a good start in developing their early reading skills.

## **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the most able pupils in key stage 1 are challenged to work at greater depth
- governors further develop their effectiveness in monitoring the school's performance and holding leaders to account
- the school's website meets statutory requirements.

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

Yours sincerely

Tracy Good  
**Ofsted Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with you, other staff with significant responsibilities and three governors, including the chair of the governing body. I took account of the 78 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's confidential online survey, comments from parents on arrival and one letter from a parent. I took account of the 18 responses to the staff survey and a recent survey of pupils conducted by the school. I visited the school's breakfast club and spoke to a small group of pupils. I observed learning in all classes jointly with you and we scrutinised pupils' work together. I analysed a range of school documentation including information about pupils' achievement, the school development plan and safeguarding checks, policies and procedures. We discussed your own evaluation of the school's effectiveness.