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Mr Gordon Soutar  
Headteacher  
St Lawrence Church of England Primary School  
Wharf Lane  
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Gloucestershire  
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Dear Mr Soutar

### **Short inspection of St Lawrence Church of England Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 17 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 January 2012.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Before you joined the school as headteacher there had been a number of rapid changes in the leadership of the school. Since your appointment you have successfully built a culture where leaders, staff and governors feel part of the school team and know that their contributions are valued. Through careful consultation with members of the school and local communities, you have made sure that there is a clear vision and ethos for the school, founded on values that are understood by both pupils and staff.

You have ensured that the curriculum pupils experience is wide-ranging. Many pupils and parents comment on the increasing range of opportunities available to pupils, such as sporting, musical and artistic events. The Christian distinctiveness of the school supports the strong provision for pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. Care is taken to ensure that pupils learn about other faiths and different cultures through well thought out activities which include visits and opportunities to talk to members of other cultures about their lives. As a result, pupils are respectful towards each other and adults and behave very well at school.

At the time of the last inspection the school was asked to increase the progress made by the most able pupils in mathematics. In the most recent Year 6 national tests, more pupils in this school reached the expected standard and above than nationally. There was a slight gap between the number of Year 2 pupils who were assessed as working at greater depth in mathematics compared with national figures. However, current pupils demonstrate that they are making good progress

in mathematics. The school's developing work on reasoning in mathematics is already strengthening and challenging the understanding of the most able pupils, particularly in the older classes in key stage 2.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of good quality. All staff know that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Regular and up-to-date training means that all staff and governors know what is expected of them. They understand and implement the most recent government guidance, including how to help protect pupils from radicalisation and extremism. Governors carefully monitor the school's work to keep pupils safe. The school's systems make sure that new staff are recruited safely and that the induction process places emphasis on the culture of safeguarding which the school promotes.

Pupils strongly say that they feel safe in school. They are very clear that they know whom to talk to if they have a worry or concern and that adults will help them. Parents very strongly agree that their children are happy, safe and well looked after in school. They speak highly of the support they and their children receive, particularly from the school's nurture team. Pupils have a clear understanding of bullying, including cyber bullying, and they say that this does not happen often. The school's curriculum helps pupils learn how to keep themselves safe. For example, pupils told me the practical steps they can take to help keep themselves safe when using new technologies, such as the internet.

### **Inspection findings**

- From the Reception class onward, pupils say that they love to write. They particularly enjoy the freedom to write about their feelings at length as part of their creative writing. There is less evidence that pupils have opportunities to write at length in some other subjects, including science and geography. As leaders you are focused on enabling more pupils to reach the highest levels in writing across the school.
- You have looked closely to see why fewer pupils reached the expected standard and above at the end of Year 2 and have identified that their handwriting had not reached the required standard. You have increased expectations of handwriting, presentation and spelling, with the result that these are improving across the school.
- There are times when teachers do not make it clear enough to pupils what to do to make their work better. For example, sometimes pupils do not receive enough information to help them understand why their sentences do not make sense. This means that they do not know how to improve on them. There are also times when pupils do not have the opportunity to reflect on their work, edit and improve it. You and your leadership team recognise that sometimes pupils do not increase their writing skills quickly enough. For example, in Year 4, pupils were not able to improve their use of paragraphs over a number of weeks.
- Pupils are working at age-appropriate levels in mathematics. Pupils have a

strong understanding of calculation. Beginning in the early years, pupils build up their skills effectively over time. For example, Year 6 pupils use their knowledge of fractions to accurately add improper fractions together.

- Changes to the way pupils are taught in mathematics are encouraging them to reason and think about their understanding of different mathematical concepts. Although recent, these changes are already leading to an improvement in pupils' reasoning skills. For example, when ordering a range of six-digit numbers, pupils in Year 5 could explain their thinking using their knowledge of place value. Pupils, including the most able of them, say that they enjoy the challenge of thinking deeply in mathematics. Pupils are confident in their reasoning about calculation but less confident in using these skills to solve problems in other areas of mathematics.
- The subject leader for mathematics has an accurate picture of mathematics teaching in the school and has identified further work to develop pupils' reasoning and mastery in mathematics. The leadership team and governors have a clear understanding of the progress that pupils are making in mathematics across the school. The support that has been put in place is effective in helping pupils who need to catch up to do so briskly, particularly in Year 3.
- Leaders keep a watchful eye on the progress of the disadvantaged pupils in the school so that now their progress is closer to that of other pupils. You give your governors detailed information about the attainment and progress of pupils, on which they challenge you regularly. Governors know how and why additional funds for disadvantaged pupils are allocated and have evaluated accurately that this money is spent well to improve disadvantaged pupils' progress.
- Your analysis of pupils' attendance means that you know clearly which groups, such as the children of service families, to focus on when improving attendance. The work of the family support worker and leader for special educational needs and/or disabilities in particular is helping to improve disadvantaged pupils' attendance so that it is currently close to the national attendance of all pupils.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils develop their reasoning skills, especially in mathematics, so that they can explore and solve more complex problems
- pupils are challenged effectively to write at the highest levels by enabling them to reflect on and improve their work.

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

Yours sincerely

Sarah O'Donnell

**Ofsted Inspector**

**Information about the inspection**

I met with you and your deputy headteacher. We talked about the improvements to the school since the last inspection. I looked at safeguarding records and tested out your recruitment and vetting procedures. I held discussions with six governors, including the chair of governors, with three other leaders and with teaching and support staff around the school.

Together, we visited mathematics and English lessons and carried out a learning walk around the rest of the school. We looked at the work in pupils' books and spoke with them about their work. I observed pupils during morning break, heard pupils read and talked with a group of pupils representing every class about their life in school.

I looked at the 79 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and considered the comments submitted. I also spoke to parents as they dropped their children off at school. I considered the 21 responses to the staff questionnaire and the 28 responses to the pupil questionnaire.

The key lines of enquiry tested out on the short inspection day were:

- How are leaders ensuring effective provision for writing given that fewer pupils reached the expected standard in writing than in reading and mathematics?
- What is the school doing to improve the progress made by the most able pupils in mathematics?
- How well are the disadvantaged pupils currently supported, including leaders' work to improve their attendance?
- How effectively does the school keep its pupils safe?