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Mrs Katie Barry  
Headteacher  
St George's Church of England Community Primary School, Gainsborough  
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Dear Mrs Barry

### **Short inspection of St George's Church of England Community Primary School, Gainsborough**

Following my visit to the school on 7 February 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 June 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 have successfully shared your vision that pupils at St George's can 'reach for the stars'. Staff at all levels appreciate the lengths you go to in order to take their views into account and to make sure that they are well informed about the priorities for the school. As a result, they are fully committed to their part in making sure that the pupils do well at the school. You, and your staff, plan learning and activities for the pupils that will enhance their life experiences and broaden their horizons. Topic work typically starts with 'Inspiration'. For example, a visit to the Yorkshire Wildlife Park inspired pupils to learn about animals and nature.

Parents who responded to the online survey, Parent View, and those who spoke with me all agreed that their children are safe, happy and well cared for at the school. Parents appreciate the information they receive about the progress their children are making. You place a very high priority on building relationships with the families and the community that your school serves. One parent described St George's Primary School as 'a great support network'.

At the time of the last inspection, inspectors asked you to raise attainment in English to be in line with national averages, to improve pupils' rates of attendance and to strengthen pupils' cultural awareness. You have successfully addressed each of these issues. In 2016, the proportion of pupils attaining the expected standard by the end of Year 6 in writing was close to the national average. The proportion of

pupils achieving the expected standard for reading, mathematics and spelling, punctuation and grammar was higher than seen nationally. The progress that pupils made in writing across key stage 2 was broadly in line with the national average, but well above the national average for both reading and mathematics.

You and your leaders are aware that the progress pupils make in writing is not quite as strong as the progress they make in reading and mathematics. You have already begun to address this. Work in pupils' books showed that pupils across key stage 2 have made strong progress in their writing so far this year, developing their skills in sentence structure, grammar and vocabulary well. One pupil had begun a story by writing 'Many moons ago, before the stars got their sparkle...'.

You and your deputy headteacher have successfully implemented strategies to improve the rates of pupils' attendance. As a result, overall attendance has increased year by year since the previous inspection. Rewards for high levels of attendance, such as during 'red box assembly', are popular with the pupils. The school's family support worker and an education welfare officer support families whose children's attendance is stubbornly low. Recently, you, your chair of governors and your family support worker have begun to hold meetings with parents if their child's attendance is a particular concern. There is some early evidence that this is improving the attendance of those few remaining pupils who are persistently absent.

The promotion of cultural awareness has a very high profile at St George's. Corridor walls display information and pupils' work about Great Britain, China and New Zealand, for example. Teachers plan regular opportunities for pupils to learn about different countries, cultures and religions. Pupils told me that they enjoy these special days. They understand the importance of learning about cultures and lifestyles that are different to their own.

The school is a calm and purposeful place in which to learn. During my visit to lessons with you, pupils across the school showed positive attitudes to learning. They were keen to answer the questions that the teachers were asking. Pupils in key stage 2 showed great resilience when tackling mathematical reasoning problems, cooperating with their peers and listening to each other's ideas with interest. Pupils take pride in their work. This is reflected in their neatly presented books. Pupils explained to me that they understand why it is important to work hard at school and could relate their learning well to getting a job when they are older.

Children start school with skills that are typically below, and sometimes significantly below, those expected of children their age. In September 2016, you opened your doors to nursery-aged children for the first time. You are rightly proud of this new addition to the school. Ensuring that children have a high-quality start to school life in order that more children achieve a good level of development by the end of the early years is currently a top priority for you and your leaders. There are early indications that children are making strong progress from their starting points this year.

## **Safeguarding is effective.**

You have made sure that safeguarding is of great importance for everyone associated with your school. Staff have regular training and understand the most up-to-date government guidance. You make sure that records of concerns about a pupil's welfare are orderly and securely kept. All staff who come to work at St George's are subject to the appropriate vetting checks. You have recently introduced an additional layer of monitoring to your safeguarding procedures. You and your deputy headteacher meet with the school's parent support worker and the chair of governors to discuss safeguarding issues and to make sure that no necessary actions go unnoticed.

Pupils say that they are taught how to keep themselves safe. They explained that a visit from the fire service had helped them to understand about fire safety. During my visit, classes across the school were dedicating the afternoon to learning about online safety. Pupils who spoke with me were confident that they are safe in school and that, if they had a concern, they all had someone they could speak to who would help them.

## **Inspection findings**

- Leaders have successfully implemented strategies to improve the progress pupils make in writing. However, the progress pupils make across key stage 2 in writing is not as strong as is seen in reading and mathematics, where pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, make much better than average progress.
- Teachers and teaching assistants have responsibilities for subjects and different aspects of learning across the school. You have provided these leaders with useful training so that they can undertake their duties effectively. Alongside pupils' individual books, I looked at outsized books which showcased learning from each class and displays on the school walls which demonstrated the breadth of subjects that pupils study. The curriculum is broad and balanced at St George's and provides pupils with many first-hand experiences to bring learning to life.
- As we visited lessons in key stage 1, we saw that phonics is being taught well. Pupils learn in small groups where teachers and teaching assistants systematically build on pupils' current knowledge and understanding. Pupils at the early stages of reading make effective use of the skills they have learned to work out unfamiliar words as they read. As pupils become more proficient readers, they enjoy the opportunities that they have to read in school and they develop clear preferences for the types of books they like to read.
- Pupils' books from across key stage 1 showed that teachers are not reliably matching the work they provide to what pupils already know and can do. Sometimes the more able pupils, for example, are completing work that is easy for them across a range of subjects. This is slowing the progress they make.
- Governors are ambitious for the pupils to do well. They are committed to the school and are very supportive of the improvements you are making. This

includes the recently opened nursery and the proposals for a new kitchen on site. Each governor is linked to a subject leader. Several governors have visited the school to find out more about their area of interest. Minutes of governors' meetings highlight the questions that governors ask of leaders. However, few governors have accessed training beyond the school in order to improve their skills. There is scope for governors to challenge leaders with greater rigour in order to hold you, and your colleagues, to account better for all aspects of school life.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers in key stage 1 have the highest expectation of what pupils can achieve by setting work that is appropriately challenging for their level of ability
- teachers accelerate pupils' progress in writing so that it matches the rapid progress that pupils make in reading and mathematics
- governors provide leaders with sufficient challenge to be able to hold them to account rigorously for all the work that they do.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, 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

Di Mullan  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During this short inspection, I met with you, your deputy headteacher, four middle leaders and six other members of staff. I met with the chair of the governing body and I spoke with a representative of the local authority on the telephone. I spoke with parents as they brought their children to school. You and I visited every classroom to see the learning that was taking place and I spoke with pupils in class. I also met more formally with a group of six pupils. Together, we scrutinised pupils' books from a range of classes. I examined a range of documentation, including the school improvement plan, your self-evaluation and documents relating to attendance, pupils' progress and safeguarding. I considered the views of parents, pupils and staff through their respective online surveys.