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Mr Nigel Johnson
Headteacher
St Peter's Church of England First School
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Dear Mr Johnson

Short inspection of St Peter's Church of England First School

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 January 2011.

This school continues to be good.

Following a period of inconsistent leadership and high staff turbulence, the governors appointed you as headteacher in October 2015. You have quickly brought stability and rigour to St Peter's. Together with the strong commitment and determination of your governors, you have ensured that a good quality of education has been maintained since the previous inspection. You and your governors are forward-thinking, and becoming part of a multi-academy trust is enabling you to work more effectively and efficiently with a wider range of West Somerset schools.

You are proud of the family feel you have cultivated. You have established an effective team who are committed to providing the best possible opportunities for the pupils to develop socially, emotionally and academically. You and your staff are right to be proud of the growing partnership you have developed with parents in the short time you have been in post.

At the time of the last inspection the school was asked to provide the pupils with more challenge in English and mathematics lessons and to improve the quality of teachers' feedback to pupils. You have ensured that teaching staff, especially those in Years 3 and 4, maintain high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Detailed questioning and well-planned activities meet the differing needs of the pupils and ensure that they are provided with suitable challenges. Teachers follow the school's agreed feedback policy, and pupils are clear about what they need to do to improve their work.

Safeguarding is effective.

Pupils report that they feel safe in school and are well looked after. They are confident that any playground worries or friendship issues are sorted out by playground leaders. More serious problems are shared with the adults in school, who are trusted by the pupils to listen to their concerns and to take appropriate action to solve them. Any patterns of absence are carefully checked and monitored to ensure that all pupils are safe and not in any danger if they are not in school.

Leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. In preparation for your forthcoming move to a multi-academy trust, you and your governors are aware that they need to ensure that your detailed recruitment and vetting records are more consistently maintained, as they are moved over to a more centralised administration system. Staff and governors have completed all relevant training, including around the prevention of extremism and radicalisation. They maintain a vigilant approach to any concerns about the possibility of female genital mutilation and child sexual exploitation. You have established strong links with specialist agencies who support those pupils and their families who need extra help and guidance.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry was to explore why, over the past few years, less than half of the children in Reception reached a good level of development. Although most of the children start school having taken advantage of the part-time childcare funding, their speaking, listening and social skills remain at a very low level. You and the governors fully understand that this is a key area of the school that requires a close focus. You have implemented a number of measures, which are regularly measured for their effectiveness. Teaching staff have benefited from visits to, and links made with, other early years providers. Additional teaching staff have been recruited to support the children, including those who are most able, those who are disadvantaged and those who need specific support. Current children's work books show that they are making good progress. The appropriate focus on sharing books, telling stories and reciting nursery rhymes encourage the children to look at books and recognise the importance of the written word. However, the outdoor learning area does not provide enough opportunity to extend the children's vocabulary and link words with meaning. There are also insufficient opportunities for the children to develop their physical skills, such as riding bikes, which would help them to learn how to coordinate and manoeuvre confidently. Teachers are working closer with parents and engaging them in their children's learning. The school is eager to develop closer working relationships with the childcare setting next door. They know that stronger links with this setting would enhance the children's early years' experience and accelerate their progress.
- My next line of enquiry was to find out why there had been a significant dip in the outcomes of the Year 1 phonics (letters and the sounds they represent) check between 2015 and 2016. You explained that the most recent cohort had a high proportion of pupils with complex learning and behavioural problems. You

swiftly took advice from a local teaching school to check that your teaching staff were teaching phonics accurately and effectively. They are now providing this cohort, who are the current Year 2, with intensive support and guidance to help them have a better understanding of the sounds that letters make. Pupils are growing in confidence in their use of phonics. This is because teaching focuses on their particular needs and understanding. The development of a consistent approach to assessing individual phonic knowledge, which is carefully checked at progress meetings, is ensuring that pupils' skills are improving.

- My final line of enquiry was to explore why boys did not do well in the Year 2 reading tests in 2016. You recognised that there were not enough books in school to motivate the boys to read. You rapidly invested in a wide range of reading materials which the boys helped to choose. By turning the library into 'a castle' and no longer using it as a group work area, you have successfully encouraged boys to read. A 'reading raffle' competition which involves prizes for regularly reading at home has had a very positive impact on encouraging those pupils who are less eager to do so. Boys are given regular and intensive support to develop their reading skills. However, although they confidently decode words, they do not read for pleasure or use their skills to widen their knowledge.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the youngest children's reading, communication and physical skills are further improved by making better use of the outdoor area for learning opportunities
- stronger links are made with the neighbouring childcare setting, so that there is more consistent support for the children and their parents
- further ways are sought to ignite boys interest in reading for both pleasure and for widening their knowledge and skills in their learning.

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

Yours sincerely

Lorna Brackstone
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and the chief executive officer of the new multi-academy trust that you are shortly to join. We talked about the improvements which had been made since the last inspection, and I considered your self-evaluation of the school's

effectiveness. I looked at all safeguarding records and explored your recruitment and vetting procedures. I also held a discussion with two middle leaders and an administrator who supports you in your role as special educational needs coordinator. I met with a group of governors, including the chair of governors and a representative from the local authority. Together we visited phonics lessons in Reception and Year 1. We also carried out a learning walk in Years 3 and 4. We looked at a sample of books from all classes. I had a discussion with five Year 4 pupils. I considered the comments submitted by four parents through Parent View, the online inspection questionnaire, and followed through any other concerns raised.