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Dear Ms Robson

Short inspection of St Peter's CofE (A) First School

Following my visit to the school on 28 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 October 2011.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. There have been many changes to the school since the previous inspection. Parents are very pleased with the way leaders and governors have managed these changes, particularly in setting up 'The Saints Federation' with two other Church of England first schools. This is proving to be effective because St Peter's is benefiting from working with the other schools to see and share best practice. The decision to admit three-year-olds (Nursery children) to the early years class has also been successful. This has enhanced and extended what was previously good provision and offers the local community both part-time and full-time pre-school provision for families with young children.

Governance is strong. The board of governors has been successful in ensuring that your appointment as the federation's executive headteacher was also strengthened by appointing a skilful and effective head of school and a federation deputy headteacher, who also manages special educational needs provision. You and the staff team have maintained the strong contribution the school makes to pupils' academic and personal development. Special educational needs funding is used very effectively to support pupils who have additional learning needs. Assessments show that these pupils quickly improve their confidence and skills in reading, writing and mathematics as well as improving their self-confidence, personal development and behaviour.

Parents paid tribute to the way, as one put it, 'The staff treat every child as an individual and really care for them.' Parents are correct in holding these views as both teachers and support staff engage pupils in stimulating and interesting topics that enable them to make good progress in their learning as well as building strong and positive relationships with pupils and adults across the school.

Assessment has improved significantly since the previous inspection as this was found to need further refinement and improvement at that time. Teachers use assessment well to help them plan lessons that are matched to the needs and abilities of pupils. It is encouraging to see that pupils are doing particularly well and achieving above average standards in reading and writing by the end of Year 2. Last year's national assessments showed that standards in mathematics were in line with national figures and pupils currently in key stage 1 are on course to reach higher standards. Pupils continue to make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics in key stage 2 and are well prepared for the next stage of their education when they transfer to a middle school at the end of Year 4.

Standards in mathematics are improving, although there is scope for the teaching to improve pupils' progress further. Some pupils make relatively slower progress in mathematics compared with reading and writing. Part of the reason for this, as we found in some of the workbooks, is that pupils are spending too much time consolidating their calculation skills before moving on to more challenging problem-solving tasks that extend and deepen their knowledge and understanding. You have, rightly, given this priority and are already adapting the way mathematics is taught to incorporate more challenging and varied problem-solving tasks.

The curriculum is very well planned to foster a love of learning, as well as encouraging pupils to care for others and the world around them. The spiritual and moral development of pupils is exceptional and this is further enhanced by the school's Christian ethos as well as the attention given to developing an understanding of world faiths, customs and cultures. Pupils enjoy the many and varied topics planned for them. For example, during the inspection pupils in Years 1 and 2 were visiting the National Space Centre in Leicester as part of their exciting topic about space exploration. I could see from the high standard of work displayed in classrooms and around the school that pupils are enthused by the current focus on children's modern and classic literature in preparation for World Book Day.

We visited the early years class and agreed that good provision has been maintained since the previous inspection. We were both impressed with the way Nursery and Reception children worked and played together independently. The school's strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development was clearly portrayed when a Reception child invited a Nursery child to join in an activity. 'Would you like to join me?' he said, and the child replied, 'Yes please, thank you.' This is just one of many examples of the outstanding and respectful behaviour that pupils display across the school and the courteous and polite way they treat parents, staff, governors and visitors. Pupils thoroughly enjoy coming to school and two pupils told me how particularly pleased they are with the opportunities they have at breaktime to share books in the special 'reading shed'.

Well above average attendance rates and low levels of persistent absenteeism confirm how much pupils enjoy school, including before and after-school clubs, physical education, visits and special visitors as well as the range of creative and performing arts and music.

Senior leaders, staff and the board of governors accurately evaluate teaching and learning. These evaluations identify the right priorities, which are set out clearly and accurately in the school development plan. The plan provides a clear route map for leaders, staff and governors to ensure sustained improvement to teaching, learning and the curriculum. However, some of the actions and priorities set out in the plan do not have specific measures of success to help gauge how much progress is being made towards achieving each action or priority. Leaders and staff regularly check pupils' progress and performance and good use is made of the leaders and staff from across the federation of three schools to ensure consistency and accurate assessments of pupils' achievement. The development plan includes timescales and milestones (checking points) to help leaders measure how much improvement is being made, for example in raising achievement in mathematics. However, these milestones are too infrequent (termly), so risking the possibility of not intervening soon enough if the school is not on track to meet its stated priorities.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding procedures are robust and effective. Staff vetting and checking systems are rigorous and up to date. Leaders and governors carry out regular reviews of the school's procedures. The safety, security and well-being of children in the Nursery and Reception class are managed by skilled early years practitioners. There are effective security systems in place to make sure that pupils are safe and secure both indoors and outdoors. Pupils are made aware of the risks associated with electronic social media or the internet because staff plan well-devised programmes and lessons on e-safety. All the parents I spoke to and those responding to the online questionnaire, Parent View, are correct in agreeing that pupils are safe in school and are very well cared for by the staff.

Inspection findings

- At the beginning of the inspection, we agreed on four key lines of enquiry for this inspection. I checked on whether pupils of middle ability make enough progress in mathematics and if boys achieve as well as they should. I also checked if teaching has improved enough since your previous inspection and if good leadership, including governance, has been maintained.
- The cohort of pupils in Year 2 last year included a significant proportion of pupils who had special educational needs and/or disabilities. Along with the small numbers in each year, these characteristics contribute to some significant variations in key stage 1 national assessment results. Nonetheless, assessments show that pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress across the school. Many of these pupils soon develop their reading, writing and mathematics skills to standards that are close to age-related

measures. In some cases this is exceptional progress in relation to their starting points.

- I checked how well boys are achieving compared with girls because last year's national assessments pointed to variations between the two groups. As you know, we checked whether there was any significance to this and found that last year's Year 2 cohort included a larger than typical group of boys who also had special educational needs and/or disabilities. Again the small cohorts taking national tests in Year 2 each year make it difficult to reach reliable interpretations or trends because outcomes can vary considerably from year to year. However, work in books and assessments of pupils' achievement in all three classes show no significant variation between boys' and girls' progress. Boys achieve as well as girls. I also found that currently there are no disadvantaged pupils in any classes to compare their achievement with others who are not disadvantaged.
- Pupils of all abilities achieve exceptionally well in reading and make good progress developing the form and structure of their writing. Standards in mathematics are improving and the large majority of pupils reach or exceed age-related standards in all year groups. However, assessments over time and current work in books show that pupils in key stage 1 and key stage 2 (Years 3 and 4) could be doing better in mathematics to match the more rapid progress they make in reading and writing.
- The teaching remains good and has many strong features. Teachers and support staff have consistently high expectations for learning and behaviour. Pupils respond by working hard and trying their best at all times. Pupils behave exceptionally well in lessons. They are articulate, share ideas and resources with their classmates and always try to present their work neatly. The high quality and range of writing in workbooks and on displays around the school reflect these high expectations. There is scope, however, to ensure that teachers always offer the right level of challenge in mathematics lessons and avoid providing repetitive work for pupils to complete before moving on to more complex problems or calculations.
- Leaders and staff have adapted assessment systems well since the changes to the national curriculum without levels. Learning targets and assessments are clearly set out in pupils' workbooks and these are used very well by pupils and staff to help pupils make progress towards their learning goals. Assessment has improved very well since the previous inspection and has helped to sharpen the way teachers plan lessons so they meet the needs of pupils of different abilities. Pupils' rapid progress in reading builds on the very good progress made in the early years and key stage 1 in phonics.
- The early years has been extended since the previous inspection to include full- and part-time provision for three-year-olds who are taught alongside Reception-aged children (four- and five-year-olds) in the early years class. This extended provision has been successful. Good provision for all early years children has been maintained since the previous inspection and is growing from strength to strength as there are some outstanding features. The children develop their confidence and skills and thrive in the early years, especially when choosing

what to learn and how to play from a range of stimulating resources and activities. One poignant example we observed together was particularly impressive. If you recall, we saw some children who were transfixed and concentrating in the wet area as they mixed coloured water into containers 'making dreams' in their 'dream jars' as part of the focus on Roald Dahl's story of the 'BFG' (Big Friendly Giant).

- Leaders and governors are very clear about which priorities need attention to sustain improvements to teaching and learning. The changes and improvements to the school since the previous inspection point to elements of strong leadership and governance. Improvement planning is based on accurate evaluations of teaching and learning which is further enhanced by the close working relationship across the federation of schools, enabling staff to develop their teaching skills and share best practice. The development plan now needs further refinement to make sure that the criteria set out for improvement can be measured and that leaders and governors check more frequently to gauge the impact of their actions.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to focus on improving pupils' achievement in mathematics by making sure that the teaching is challenging enough for pupils who are capable of reaching or exceeding age-related standards
- they include clear measures of success and more regular checking points in the school development plan to help gauge the impact of actions towards sustained improvement.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of governors, the director of education for the Diocese of Lichfield, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Staffordshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Charalambos Loizou
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, the head of school, the federation's deputy headteacher and chair of the board of governors. We visited every class together to observe some teaching, looked at pupils' work in books and spoke to pupils during lessons. I also spoke to some pupils during morning breaktime. I spoke to some parents at the start of the school day and considered the 17 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. I scrutinised the school's development plan and priorities, and

discussed with senior leaders how you all check pupils' progress and teachers' performance. The head of school shared with me the most recent assessments of pupils' attainment and progress and we discussed the national test results and assessments undertaken by key stage 1 pupils in 2016. I checked staff vetting and safeguarding procedures to determine whether the school's arrangements for safeguarding are effective.