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Tracey Parker  
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Dear Miss Parker

### **Short inspection of Great Harwood St John's Church of England Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 14 March 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 July 2013.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection and has ensured that the school continues to improve. You have successfully created a school culture that balances the ambition for pupils to achieve as well as they can do academically with strong pastoral support. Staff say that they enjoy working at St John's and parents are highly supportive. Virtually all of the parents who responded to the Parent View survey would recommend the school to another parent, and many commented on the school's 'lovely, caring ethos' and felt that their children were 'happy, safe and well looked after'.

Pupils are friendly and well mannered. They behave sensibly around school and on the playground and say that behaviour is good, and that they like the clear reward systems that are in place to encourage hard work and good behaviour. They say that any incidents of silly behaviour are quickly dealt with by staff. Pupils show positive attitudes to learning in their lessons and are eager to answer questions or offer ideas. They told me that they particularly enjoy going on school trips to places like Chester Zoo and Robinwood Activity Centre. The curriculum at St John's is suitably broad. It provides pupils with good learning experiences across a broad range of areas, such as the Anglo-Saxons, volcanoes, healthy living and the Stone Age. The school also promotes British values very effectively, and pupils can talk confidently about these. One pupil summed up British values as, 'keeping Britain civilised'.

You have addressed the areas for improvement successfully which were identified in the school's previous inspection report. Your school development plan is a detailed and thorough document that is based on leaders' clear awareness of the school's current strengths and weaknesses. Areas for improvement are identified and actions to address these areas are planned, carried out and then evaluated to check that they are having the desired impact. You have also ensured that more of the most-able pupils are making faster progress in mathematics. As a result, in 2016, the proportion achieving the highest level at the end of key stage 2 was well above the national average. This is because mathematics teaching across the school is very effective. Finally, the work in pupils' books in key stage 1 and early in key stage 2 shows that there have been improvements in their handwriting, spelling and punctuation skills. An increasing proportion are working at the expected standard for their age.

There is no sense of complacency though, and you acknowledge that there are still areas to work on. While rates of pupils' progress in reading are increasing, more can be done to accelerate progress and raise attainment in reading further. In particular, many pupils have a limited range of vocabulary, and this hinders their understanding of what they are reading. The good work that is being done to promote reading and develop pupils' reading comprehension needs to be developed further. A second key area for the school to improve is pupil attendance. There is no doubt that the school is working very hard to tackle the poor attendance of some pupils and ensure that all pupils and their families understand the importance of excellent attendance. However, rates of attendance are still below national average and some pupils miss school too regularly, which has a negative impact on their learning.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of a high quality. Leaders ensure that thorough checks are made on staff, governors, volunteers and regular visitors to the school to make sure that they are suitable people to work with children. Leaders also make sure that staff and governors receive regular training so that their knowledge of the latest good practice in safeguarding is kept up to date.

Staff have a good understanding of what to do if they are worried about a pupil's welfare, and leaders have put robust procedures in place to ensure that all concerns are followed up. Leaders responsible for safeguarding are knowledgeable and have developed positive relationships with parents and external agencies, so that all can work together to make sure that children are kept safe and are well cared for.

School leaders and governors have worked well to ensure that both of the school's sites are safe and secure. Pupils are confident that this is the case, and explain how the codes on external doors keep unwanted visitors out. They also show a good knowledge of how to keep themselves safe in different situations. They can talk confidently about strategies for staying safe online, such as not sharing personal details and using strong passwords.

## Inspection findings

- The inspection focused on a number of key lines of enquiry. The first of these was to look at how effective teaching is in key stage 1 and whether pupils are making good enough progress from the end of early years. We looked together at the 2016 key stage 1 results, which suggested that progress for that particular cohort of pupils had not been as strong as expected. However, there were significant changes to the cohort, with a large number of pupils leaving and a similar number arriving in the school. It is clear from the school's own data and also from the work in pupils' books at the moment that these pupils are making good progress from their individual starting points. Assessment information also shows that pupils currently in Year 2 are progressing strongly and are on track to reach levels of attainment that are at least in line with national average.
- A second area that I looked into was pupils' achievement in reading across key stage 2. You recognised that attainment and progress scores in the 2016 key stage 2 tests were not as strong as they had been previously. You took swift and appropriate action to address the issue. Reading is being promoted very effectively across the school and pupils spoke enthusiastically about the Year 5 and 6 book club. The most-able readers in upper key stage 2 read confidently and accurately and have positive attitudes towards reading. Teachers are focusing more on developing pupils' reading skills. You have ensured that there is focused support in place to help those pupils who need to catch up quickly, or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. School assessment data shows that rates of progress and levels of attainment in reading across the school are on the way up
- Finally, I looked at pupils' attendance, and particularly the attendance of disadvantaged pupils. The school has ensured that attendance has a very high profile, for example in newsletters, around school and on the school website. Issues with attendance are followed up promptly. The school has an attendance officer, employed jointly with other local schools, who provides support and challenge for families who have attendance issues. Disadvantaged pupils are supported in many different ways, including receiving subsidised access to the school's breakfast club. For these pupils, there are signs that there has been some improvement in their attendance. Rates of persistent absence among disadvantaged pupils are currently far lower than last year. However, overall attendance rates are still below national average and further work is needed to secure sustained, significant improvement in this area.
- One of the key strengths at St John's is the quality of leadership shown by you, governors and other leaders across the school. The impact of this effective leadership can be seen both in pupils' academic and social development and also in the good and improving quality of provision across the school. For example, ongoing improvements to the learning environment and teaching have ensured that children get off to a very good start in early years. The proportion of children reaching the good level of development has improved to be above the national average. The local authority has great confidence in the school's capacity for further improvement, and see the school as now being well placed to provide support for other schools.

## **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the rate of pupils' progress in reading is accelerated by developing pupils' comprehension skills further and expanding their vocabulary
- the proportion of pupils missing school regularly is reduced, so that rates of attendance improve to be at least in line with the national average.

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

Yours sincerely

Neil Dixon  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During this short inspection I met with you, three members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority. I also met a group of teaching and support staff. I considered 12 responses from parents to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. Two responses to the staff survey and three responses to the pupil survey were also considered. I met with a group of pupils and heard a number of other pupils read. I visited all of the classes in the school, and you accompanied me when I visited classes in early years and key stage 1. I looked at pupils' work across a range of year groups and subjects. I also looked at a range of documentation covering different aspects of the school's work.