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Mrs Jo Yardley
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Yardley

Short inspection of Church Vale Primary School and Foundation Unit

Following my visit to the school on 3 May 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 March 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You set high expectations and have a clear idea of both the strengths of Church Vale and those aspects that require most attention. The staff are a close and united team who work together well, sharing and exchanging good ideas and supporting each other to improve their practice further.

Pupils who I met during my visit told me how they enjoy coming to school to learn, and that teachers make learning exciting. Pupils follow instructions, cooperate well and concentrate hard on their work. Relationships are positive and pupils' behaviour is polite and friendly. Pupils' overall attendance is currently above the national average. Parents' responses to both your most recent questionnaire and to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, are unanimously positive. As one parent explained, 'My children make excellent progress. Staff are extremely supportive and are always available if I need to discuss any aspect. The headteacher is strong and has an invaluable connection to parents. I consider it a privilege that my children attend Church Vale.'

Children enter the school in the Nursery class with considerably lower levels of skills than are typical for their age. This is particularly the case in communication and language. You therefore ensure that staff continually model language for children, asking them probing questions that develop their ability to express themselves and

to make appropriate choices. As a result, children quickly settle in and make good progress through the early years.

Overall standards have historically been in line with those of other pupils nationally, and were so last year in writing, but you are fully aware that results in 2016 from the tests in reading and mathematics at the ends of key stages 1 and 2 were not good enough. Published data indicated that pupils made significantly less progress in these subjects, compared with that of other pupils nationally. The subject leader for English explained to me how, last year, too many pupils in key stage 1 did not complete their work at sufficient speed, and how the levels of comprehension skills of pupils in key stage 2 were not consistently high enough. In addition, pupils did not read often and widely enough. The leader for mathematics told me how, although teachers worked successfully to fill pupils' gaps in their knowledge of number and of shape, space and measure, the curriculum did not focus sufficiently on the application of these skills. As a result, not enough pupils were able to demonstrate effectively that they could reason mathematically.

You wasted no time in implementing rapid adjustments to ensure that these shortcomings were addressed. As a result, the overall quality of teaching across the school is now good in the early years and in both key stages. During my visit, I looked at an extensive sample of pupils' work in these subjects. This confirmed convincingly, that pupils in all groups are making good progress, with most pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, set to achieve at least the expectations for their age by the end of the school year. Progress is not yet rapid, however, because a very small minority of teachers still do not ensure that pupils receive regular opportunities to undertake comprehension work in reading, and to build their skills in mathematical reasoning.

You are ensuring that the changes you have made to the curriculum are proving effective by checking very closely the progress that pupils are making. You and subject leaders look very regularly at pupils' workbooks, and visit many lessons to ensure that pupils are now learning well. Pupils who are falling behind, including in the phonics screening check at the end of Year 2, are being given good support to help them catch up. Teachers make thorough assessments of their pupils' work, and check that these are accurate by discussing examples of it with colleagues in a number of other local schools.

The school's governing body is effective because, like you, it has a good understanding of how well pupils are doing, and what more staff need to do so that pupils' progress continues to accelerate. You ensure that governors receive extensive and regular information on standards in reading, writing and mathematics from different groups in all year groups. They use this to hold you and other leaders rigorously to account and to ensure that, now pupils are making good gains once again, these are being sustained.

Safeguarding is effective.

You, the staff and the governing body continually make the safeguarding of pupils the highest concern. You ensure that all staff are well trained in all aspects of safeguarding, including in understanding and responding to extremism. As a result, staff are vigilant for any warning signs that a pupil may be being harmed, and can explain at length the indicators of different forms of abuse. They have a clear knowledge of their responsibility to report their concerns to you, and do not hesitate to do so. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality.

Pupils I met during my visit were very keen to tell me that they and their peers feel safe in school. They told me how, if they are ever worried about anything, they can approach an adult, place a note in the school's 'worry box' or see a member of the school council, or the head boy or the head girl to help them. They explained, however, that both bullying and name-calling are rare. Pupils also told me how the school teaches them well how to keep safe from a variety of dangers, including those found using new technology. Pupils know not to disclose their personal details when online, never to agree to meet strangers and to show any image or message that worried them to an adult whom they trust.

Inspection findings

- You have ensured that you have dealt well with the areas that inspectors asked you to improve at the last inspection. For example, the standard of presentation in pupils' books is consistently high. Pupils in all year groups complete their work neatly, and with both care and pride.
- Scrutiny of books from last year shows that pupils' achievement in Year 6 in reading and mathematics in 2016 was considerably higher than that indicated in published tests. Even so, not enough of these pupils had sufficiently high skills in mathematical application and in reading comprehension.
- Pupils' workbooks and their reading records confirm the school's information that pupils currently in the school are now making good progress in reading. As well as purchasing new resources, teachers have attended useful training and have visited other schools to see high-quality teaching for themselves. Pupils are now reading widely in school and are very keen to take their books home to read. Teachers have also improved how they plan and deliver lessons so that pupils are now developing good skills in phonics and are completing their comprehension work at greater speed. Older pupils are being taught effectively to infer meaning from texts and to ensure that their answers are consistently precise. In a very small minority of year groups, teachers do not yet give pupils enough opportunities to develop their comprehension skills while reading.
- Pupils' progress in mathematics is also now good. You have altered the mathematics curriculum so that pupils are much more confident in applying what they know when answering word-based problems. You now expect pupils to be able to teach others what they know. However, not all teachers yet plan

sufficiently regular tasks for pupils that require them to explain their mathematical thinking clearly. As a result, pupils' progress is not consistently rapid.

- Pupil premium funding is spent effectively, ensuring that disadvantaged pupils currently in the school are being supported well and are making good gains in both reading and mathematics. This includes the most able disadvantaged pupils. Teachers also match the work that they give these pupils closely to their ability so that it makes them think deeply.
- You and the staff promote pupils' mental and physical health well. For example, pupils learn how to give each other a brief massage when their peers feel anxious, while pupils in a number of year groups learn yoga. Pupils say these skills help them to relax. Those who are vulnerable or distressed due to external circumstances are helped through a wide variety of therapeutic support. Pupils I met told me how staff also encourage them to eat healthily and to take regular exercise. They greatly enjoy the many extra-curricular sporting clubs that the school provides.
- All parents who responded to Parent View and its free-text facility, as well as those I met during my visit, and those who responded to your most recent questionnaire, confirm that you and the staff keep pupils safe.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- all teachers give pupils ample opportunities to complete comprehension work and to apply their skills through mathematical reasoning.

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

Yours sincerely

Roary Pownall
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and shared my key lines of enquiry. I also met with the school's deputy headteacher, the subject leaders for English and mathematics, members of the governing body, and a small number of parents at the end of the school day. I considered the responses of parents from Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and the school's most recent questionnaire to parents. We visited classes in the early years and in both key stages, spending a short time in each. I looked at a sample of pupils' work. I viewed a range of documents,

including leaders' evaluation of the school's current performance and its plans for further improvement, information on how the pupil premium is spent and a number of policy documents, including those for safeguarding and special educational needs. I examined the school's website to check that it meets requirements on the publication of specified information. I observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and met with a group of them at breaktime. I met staff and discussed with them their opinions of the school and its leadership. We visited the school's breakfast club to check that pupils were safe, happy and well looked after.