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Miss Sally-Anne Ward
Headteacher
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Dear Miss Ward

Short inspection of Sir John Offley CofE (VC) Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 23 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 January 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 lead the school well and, together with the assistant headteacher and governing body, you have created a culture of high expectations. Each pupil, irrespective of their starting point, is encouraged to do his or her very best in order to succeed. This is achieved by staff giving pupils clear guidance on what they need to do in order to improve their work.

Pupils join the school with standards in reading, writing and mathematics which are slightly lower than those expected for their age. In 2016, outcomes in reading were not as good as those for mathematics and writing. You have addressed the comparatively weaker performance in reading effectively. You have used careful analysis of pupils' progress and outcomes in the subject to identify the areas of reading that needed addressing. The leader for English has worked effectively with the whole staff to develop their skills, particularly around questioning in guided reading. As a result, pupils' skills in reading are at a level you would expect for their age.

An area for improvement in the last inspection was to develop the thoughtful and relevant use of information technology to support children's learning. Leaders have embedded technology into the learning and assessment within the classroom. An

example of this was observed during lessons where pupils were seen using tablet computers to support their understanding of the text. In a further example, teachers utilised this technology to instantaneously upload assessments during a guided reading lesson. In other lessons, video clips are used effectively to explain theme and character development.

Leaders have also revised assessment systems to allow for more accurate identification of any barriers to learning. This information is then used well to plan learning that is clearly aimed at diminishing any differences between the outcomes of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally. As a result, disadvantaged pupils are now making strong progress.

The school has identified behaviour as a strength and pupils agree. One pupil remarked, 'Everybody here is kind and will go out of their way to play with you.' Pupils are happy, confident and extremely polite individuals, who show great pride in their school. You ensure that there is a high focus on rewarding positive behaviour. You also provide pupils with a chance to reflect, if their behaviour is not acceptable. The high focus on Christian values, closely linked with British values, further supports pupils' understanding of right and wrong and how to be a good citizen.

Most parents speak highly of the school and the support it provides to families. Parents especially value the excellent communication from the school through the weekly newsletter and how welcoming all staff are. You and your staff work hard to ensure that families, as well as pupils, receive any support that is needed. One parent who had moved her children from a previous school informed me: 'There has been a change in my children. They have a voice and they are happy.'

A further focus from the last inspection was to provide more time for pupils to review and correct their written work. The work currently in English books demonstrates that pupils are being challenged in writing. However, errors in grammar, spelling and punctuation are impacting on the quality of some pupils' written work across the curriculum. Current pupils are generally not attaining at the expected level for their age because the teaching of phonics does not engage them as it should. In addition, Year 1 pupils' attainment in phonics fell below the national average in 2016. You have recognised both of these areas as a focus for further improvement across the school in 2017.

The proportion of children in Reception achieving a good level of development is now in line with national averages. The early years settings provide a bright and stimulating learning environment. The children are confident and happy and have positive relationships with all staff. Staff know the needs of the children well. As a result, the progress of pupils by the end of the early years is good.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that all statutory requirements are fully met, including effective pre-

employment checks to ensure the suitability of staff appointments. Staff understand what action to take if they have a concern about a pupil. You work productively with other professionals, such as social workers. This ensures that referrals for early and more specialist support are managed very well. Record-keeping is meticulous and leaders make effective use of information to act quickly if pupils' circumstances change.

Pupils report that they feel safe in school and have no hesitation in seeking the support of an adult if they had a worry or concern. One pupil reported, 'You can talk to the teachers about anything.' Parents are confident that their children are safe and well cared for and express confidence in being able to seek help from you and your staff. One parent, whose child has diabetes, remarked that you, 'do an amazing job making sure he is safe'. The curriculum provides many opportunities for pupils to learn about how to keep themselves safe, including when using modern technology. Pupils are taught to manage issues independently and they dismiss the idea that bullying occurs in school. A group of Year 4 pupils explained, 'We have arguments but we can usually sort things out ourselves.'

Inspection findings

- Following a recent dip in the performance of pupils in reading at the end of key stage 2, you have ensured that learning to read has the highest priority from the early years through to Year 6. Pupils are exposed to a wide range of texts and adults encourage pupils to see that reading is a pleasurable and fun thing to do. One pupil explained to me that the school's introduction of whole-class guided reading had expanded the types of books they were reading. He commented that 'Reading is now my favourite subject.' This focus on reading is having a positive impact on pupils' progress and attainment. School progress information shows that overall, pupils are on track for better outcomes at expected and higher standards at the end of key stage 2 than previously.
- You and your teachers have developed high-quality relationships between adults and pupils. Pupils are interested and willing to learn. They speak positively about their learning and the challenging work that your teachers set them. They are happy in this well-led and friendly school. This can be seen in pupils' improving attendance rates. Attendance rates of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities have improved due to actions taken. They are now similar to the national average for primary schools.
- Procedures for encouraging attendance are robust and the school has effective and motivating strategies to sustain good levels of attendance compared with national figures.
- Teachers value highly the opportunities they have to work together to improve their practice. They work together in pairs to support and develop one another's practice, which enables teaching strengths to be shared across the school. Further training and professional development is provided within the school. As a result, teachers feel they are well supported and have the knowledge and skills necessary to impact on pupils' progress.
- Leaders, including governors, have an accurate view of the school's strengths

and areas for development. Actions to tackle weaknesses are robust and plans are sharply focused on raising achievement.

- School assessment information shows that currently most pupils who are disadvantaged make good progress from their starting points. Pupil premium funding is spent effectively. This ensures that disadvantaged pupils are being supported well and are making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- In 2016, a lower proportion of pupils attained the expected standard in phonics by the end of Year 1 than was seen nationally and this is part of a three-year, small downward trend. The work set for pupils in phonics sessions does not consistently challenge pupils. Consequently, the most able and the least able pupils are not making as much progress as they could.
- In 2016, key stage 2 pupils' attainment in English grammar, punctuation and spelling was below average. Pupils' attainment in the spelling element of this assessment was also below average. You have already put in a plan of action to promote the development of English grammar, punctuation and spelling. There is planned training to support staff on aspects of writing, such as spelling and phonics.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the work set for pupils in phonics sessions closely matches their different abilities so that the most able are appropriately stretched and the least able are given the right amount of support
- pupils are provided with more opportunities to practise their grammar and punctuation skills and know how to check whether their spelling is accurate.

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

Max Vlahakis
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, we discussed your self-evaluation and agreed my key lines of enquiry. I met with members of staff; four governors, including the chair of the governing body; a group of pupils; and parents. I considered the responses of parents to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. I visited all classes in the school,

spending a short time in each. I looked at a range of pupils' work. I viewed a range of documents, including leaders' evaluation of the school's current performance and plans for improvement. I considered evidence and records relating to safeguarding. This included a range of safeguarding documentation such as the central record of recruitment checks, the safeguarding policy and safeguarding records. In addition, I considered the school's attendance information and how the pupil premium funding is spent. I examined the school's website to check that it meets the requirements on the publication of specified information.