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Mrs Nicola Berry
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Berry

Short inspection of St John's Mead Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 20 June 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 June 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, and other senior leaders, are highly ambitious for all pupils and communicate clearly your high expectations of staff. You, leaders and governors, have accurately identified areas for school improvement, for example in mathematics, and have taken swift action to address them. As a result, the standards pupils achieve in mathematics are improving. You have open lines of communication with parents and a very evident commitment to ensuring that their children achieve their best. This means that parents are sure any concerns will be listened to, and firmly believe the school is well led and managed. The overwhelming majority would recommend the school to another parent. The school's ethos of 'valuing effort, valuing others, valuing self' suffuses life at the school. Pupils are keen to learn and eager to challenge themselves. Through the system of the school council, and other opportunities such as the pupil-risk assessment group and regular gathering of their views by leaders, pupils are very confident that their voices will be heard at school.

Governors know their school well. The chair of governors has drawn together governors with skills that complement the work of the governing body. For example, governors with specific skills provide valuable support to leaders and governors in evaluating the school's work on safeguarding and for disadvantaged pupils.

At the time of the last inspection leaders were asked to ensure that the rates of progress were consistent between classes. Leaders use the school's assessment

systems to track and monitor the progress of all pupils effectively. Through regular pupil-progress meetings, they hold staff to account for the progress pupils make in their classes. The school's systems for the appraisal of teachers take into account the progress pupils make in classes. As a result, pupils across the school make better progress, particularly in writing.

Safeguarding is effective.

School staff know the pupils in their care and their families very well. Leaders have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and carefully maintained. The school communicates very clearly that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Regular training means that school staff know what to do if they have a concern about a child. The induction arrangements for new staff are effective and emphasise the school's culture of safeguarding children, so that any risk is minimised. Governors monitor carefully the school's safeguarding work, for example through regular meetings and the completion of audits on safeguarding. Safeguarding is a standing agenda item at all governors' meetings.

Pupils say they feel safe in school. They are very clear that they know who to talk to if they have a worry or concern and that adults will quickly help them. Parents very strongly agree that their children are happy, safe and well looked after in school. Pupils have a clear understanding of bullying and say this happens rarely. This is confirmed in the school's records and by parents' responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. The curriculum helps pupils to learn how to keep themselves safe, for example when using new technologies and the internet.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection, I looked closely at the standard of pupils' writing. I checked to see if the improvements in pupils' progress and attainment in writing in 2016 have been sustained this year. Evidence in pupils' books, and from discussions with them about their work, shows that pupils write well, particularly by the end of key stage 2. Many pupils, both boys and girls, say they enjoy writing. The strategies that leaders put in place in response to disappointing results in 2014 have led to improvements in pupils' writing across the school. For example, increased opportunities to write independently and at length have encouraged pupils' writing stamina and interest right from Year 1. Teachers' accurate assessment means that the feedback and targets pupils receive make it clear to pupils what they need to do to work at an expected and at a higher level in their writing. This is helping more of them to write in greater depth. Leaders have introduced a whole-school handwriting style, together with high expectations for presentation. As a result, pupils' work across the school is now well presented, relative to their different ages, particularly in their English and curriculum work. Sometimes, in mathematics, the expectations for pupils' presentation are less high.
- Leaders check pupils' progress frequently and act swiftly when they identify that progress has slowed. For example, in response to a slight dip in the numbers of

pupils achieving well in the Year 1 national phonics check in 2016, the leader for English changed the way phonics is taught in the school. This has resulted in a higher proportion of pupils in Year 1 who are on track to reach the expected standard for their age at the end of this academic year.

- Pupils' progress in mathematics is less rapid than their progress in reading and writing. You have recognised this and changed the teaching of mathematics to include more opportunities for pupils to use and apply their knowledge, skills and understanding in this subject. Pupils are developing their reasoning skills, enabling them to solve problems and explain their answers. This is evident in pupils' mathematics books. However, you identify that this practice is not yet fully embedded across the school. In addition, you have identified that expectations need to be raised further so pupils can articulate and explain their thinking more often. In 2016 the progress of the most able pupils in key stage 1 was below the national level in mathematics. The changes to the teaching of mathematics mean that the most able pupils in key stage 1 are making better progress in mathematics and that pupils now in Year 3 are catching up rapidly.
- I checked how well disadvantaged pupils learn and achieve in the school. The deputy headteacher is a strong advocate for disadvantaged pupils and their families. She has clearly identified potential barriers to learning for these pupils and carefully monitors their progress. She evaluates the effectiveness of strategies introduced to increase the progress of disadvantaged pupils. Teachers' expectations for disadvantaged pupils are high and, as a result, current pupils, including the most able, are making progress close to that of other pupils. Governors have a clear rationale for the allocation of the additional funds for disadvantaged pupils. A governor champion meets regularly with leaders to monitor their progress and to ensure that the additional funds are effectively spent.
- I looked at the effectiveness of leaders' work to increase attendance at the school. Published figures show that pupils' attendance at school is below the national average for all pupils. Leaders have built up close and effective links with pupils and their families in the Traveller community. As a result, these pupils and their families value their relationship with the school and attend when resident in the community. The school's work to support other pupils and their families to ensure that their child attends school each day means that the attendance of these pupils is at the national level.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- changes to the teaching of reasoning in mathematics are embedded and that opportunities for pupils to explain and articulate their reasoning are consistent across the school
- the quality of pupils' presentation is as consistently high in mathematics as it is in their English work.

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

Yours sincerely

Sarah O'Donnell
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, your deputy headteacher and other senior leaders. We discussed developments in the school since the last inspection. I looked at safeguarding records and tested out your recruitment and vetting procedures. I held discussions with governors, including the chair of governors, and talked with a representative of the local authority. I talked to teachers and support staff around the school. Together, we visited lessons and carried out a learning walk across the school. We talked to pupils about their learning and evaluated the quality of work in their books. I asked pupils to read to me from the texts they were working on in their classes and from their work. I observed and talked to pupils at break and lunchtime. I met a group of pupils to talk about their life at school. I considered the 53 responses to Parent View and the 33 comments submitted, and a letter from a parent.