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Miss Jane Morris
Headteacher
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Dear Miss Morris

Short inspection of St Paul's Church of England Aided Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 29 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 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. 'Unifying us in teamwork. Everlasting help.' This quote from a pupil's poem sums up the ethos of your school perfectly. You and your leaders have created a culture where all are valued. You put the pupils at the heart of everything that you do and are determined that pupils develop a 'joy of learning'. You and all your staff continually seek ways to give pupils new experiences, such as ice-skating courses, musical opportunities and sessions on surviving in the wild. This opens pupils' minds to what they could aspire to in the future. You are unwavering in your determination to ensure that all pupils receive rich and broad learning experiences, which is to be applauded. This passion and drive to provide pupils with a well-rounded education results in them becoming confident, mature and independent learners.

At the time of the last inspection, leaders were asked to improve teachers' questioning skills to help pupils to think more deeply. You have successfully achieved this, not only with teachers but also with teaching assistants. There are many examples across the school where all adults use effective questioning to challenge and deepen pupils' thinking. Teachers and teaching assistants regularly ask pupils to explain their answers in more detail. Pupils are asked to justify their views and opinions, which enables teachers to have a greater understanding of where pupils are in their learning. They are able to articulate their thoughts with clarity, and show a high level of respect for one another's views and opinions.

They also demonstrate great maturity in their approach to learning. This is helping pupils to make good progress, particularly in English and mathematics, and in other subjects taught.

Enabling pupils to work together to develop their speaking skills was another development point from the last inspection. Your work to improve this area has been highly effective. Pupils have many opportunities to work together, not just in school, but also during residential trips and visits. The activities sessions which focus on music, art, drama, dance, design and food technology provide extensive opportunities for pupils to work in teams, which enhances their personal and social skills. Pupils' ability to work collaboratively together and communicate effectively is a strength of the school. They speak confidently and clearly with their peers and adults. All pupils were very keen to share information about school life with me.

Leaders were also asked to ensure that pupils have more opportunities to work independently and to let them have more freedom to make their own choices and decisions about what they learn. Again, you have tackled these areas very well. Pupils say that they have the opportunity to undertake projects independently to improve their learning. Pupils value the support that teachers give them, but demonstrate a good capacity to work independently. This was seen both in lessons and in examples of pupils' work. Pupils have mature attitudes to learning and show a clear desire to improve in all aspects of their work.

Making English and mathematics learning more interesting has also been a focus since the last inspection. The work that you and your teachers have put into this area has been very successful. There are many examples of creative approaches to teaching English and mathematics in all years. For instance, Year 6 pupils were given visual resources of an exceptionally high quality to stimulate their writing about the characters' feelings in 'The Highwayman' poem. One pupil simply said 'Wow' when they saw the pictures for the first time. Writing opportunities are linked to pupils' real-life experiences. For example, pupils write reports about their sports days; design brochures and leaflets linked to their residential visits; and use their scientific, geographical and mathematical skills when carrying out their study of the River Penk. Pupils say, 'Work is never just straight. Work always has a fun element.'

However, while there are varied and exciting learning opportunities in English and mathematics, pupils do not consistently present work to the best of their ability in these subjects. In addition to this, pupils do not have enough opportunities to record their learning in subjects other than English and mathematics. While pupils make good progress across all areas of the curriculum, giving them more opportunities to record their learning in these subjects will help to ensure that they are fully prepared for the demands of secondary school. You recognise that these areas need to be a focus for improvement.

Safeguarding is effective.

You, school leaders and governors have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose, and that child protection records are detailed and of high quality. All staff take pupils' safety very seriously.

You work closely with the local authority to ensure that all safeguarding policies and procedures are up to date, understood by all staff and implemented rigorously.

You make sure that staff receive updated child protection and 'Prevent' duty training, when necessary, and provide termly safeguarding updates. Recruitment and staff vetting checks made on staff working in school are detailed, and leaders ensure that all safer recruitment processes to appoint new staff are followed carefully.

Pupils speak with confidence about their personal, social and health education (PSHE) lessons. You make sure that they are taught how to keep themselves safe in different situations, especially when using computers. Pupils have a very good understanding of e-safety. Pupils value the work of the school's counsellor. They know that they can drop in and speak to her, or any other member of staff, whenever they are worried or have a concern about something.

Any learning experiences which may involve some risk, such as cooking and the outdoor learning sessions, are managed carefully. Pupils understand the importance of following the rules and behaving sensibly in these lessons so that they are safe from harm. They say they are taught how to use tools and kitchen equipment safely.

Inspection findings

- Governors have a detailed and accurate understanding of the school's performance. This is because you and your leaders provide them with clear and comprehensive information about school outcomes. Governors challenge you to check that the actions that you take to improve pupils' performance are having a positive impact. They also provide tremendous support for you and your staff to ensure that the school's aims and values are fulfilled.
- The governors are very forward thinking. For example, the new chair of governors received training and support to prepare her well for the challenges of the role, prior to her taking it up. Governors have taken great care to ensure that there is a broad range of skills across the governing body. As a result, they are very effective in their roles, which is helping to secure the future strength of the school, including its financial viability.
- You have placed a strong focus on improving the teaching of writing across the school. The literacy task group was set up to further strengthen the teaching of writing. Teachers work together to regularly check pupils' progress in writing and to identify where further support is needed to move learning on. A high focus has been placed on improving teachers' and teaching assistants' knowledge and understanding of grammar. Training has focused on the use of the correct

terminology and the application of grammar rules when pupils write.

- As a result of the support and training in writing, greater staff knowledge and understanding of grammar and more creative teaching of writing, pupils are making better progress and are achieving higher standards in the subject. In 2017, more Year 6 pupils attained the higher level of learning in writing than in 2016, especially the most able.

Writing standards are also rising in all other year groups. However, while pupils are making better progress in writing and reaching higher standards, they do not consistently present their work to the best of their ability.

- You and your leaders have a very good understanding of the needs of disadvantaged pupils. As soon as these children enter Nursery and Reception, you check what additional support they need and then ensure that it is put in place to help them to make good progress in their learning. Currently, children in Nursery and Reception are making at least good progress across all areas of learning.
- The support for disadvantaged pupils is built upon as they move through the school. You monitor the changing needs of individuals and respond quickly to make sure that they continue to receive the right support so that they make the progress of which they are capable. For example, additional teachers provide small group work, and the school counsellor provides support for social and emotional needs. As a result, at the end of key stage 2 in 2016 disadvantaged pupils made similar progress to other pupils nationally in writing and mathematics, and better progress in reading. Currently, disadvantaged pupils are making good progress across the school in reading, writing and mathematics.
- You and your leaders instil a love of learning, and this applies to teachers and pupils. You have high expectations of your teachers and provide them with the necessary support and challenge to improve their practice. However, you also nurture all your staff, which makes them feel valued so that they give of their best. Your effective monitoring of teaching identifies the precise support that teachers need to help them to improve, which you then provide.
- Consequently, no teaching in the school is less than good, and some is outstanding. You place a high importance on providing teachers with every opportunity to develop professionally. For example, some teachers have recently completed training to become local authority moderators and others have received leadership training. This is further strengthening the quality of teaching, learning, assessment and leadership capacity across the school.
- You have a passion for ensuring that all pupils receive wide and rich learning experiences. You have developed an exceptional curriculum. All pupils have the opportunity to learn to play the ukulele, as well as instruments such as the drums and the cornet. 'Activities' on a Wednesday morning provide exciting learning experiences in music, art, drama, dance, food and design technology. You and your leaders have carefully designed the activities so that they suitably build and improve pupils' academic and personal skills from one year to the next. For example, in food technology, pupils start by learning basic skills such as sifting and melting to make chocolate biscuits. Skills are then developed so that, by the

end of Year 6, pupils are blending sauces and frying to make chilli con carne. The work that pupils produce in all these areas is of a very high quality and was a delight to see.

- The learning across the curriculum is purposeful and enables pupils to apply their basic skills such as reading, writing and problem solving in subjects such as history and geography. 'Activities' on a Wednesday are also linked to the wider curriculum. For example, pupils research alternative ingredients to use in recipes, as people during World War 2 would have had to during the rationing period. However, while the wider curriculum is of an exceptional quality and enables pupils to make good progress in all subjects, they do not have sufficient opportunities to record what they are learning about, and some work recorded is not to the best of their ability.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- Teachers insist that pupils consistently produce work to the best of their ability in all subjects.
- Pupils are given sufficient opportunities to record their work in subjects other than English and mathematics.

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 Wolverhampton. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Ann Pritchard
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection I met with you, the deputy headteacher, the early years leader and members of the governing body. I also met a representative from the local authority. I talked to pupils about their learning and looked at examples of their work. I observed pupils' behaviour at breaktime and lunchtime. I spoke to parents before school and to pupils throughout the day. I reviewed a range of documentation, including the school's own evaluation of its performance, documents relating to keeping pupils safe and the most recent information about pupils' achievement. I considered the responses to Ofsted's online parental questionnaire. There were no responses from the pupil or staff questionnaire.