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Mr Jeremy Payne  
St James' Church of England Primary Academy  
Pokesdown Hill  
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Dear Mr Payne

### **Short inspection of St James' Church of England Primary Academy**

Following my visit to the school on 27 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in 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 were appointed after a turbulent time for the leadership of the school. The executive officer for the trust has guided and supported you wisely during the 15 months since your appointment. She knows the school well because she was one of the interim headteachers for a period of time. You have worked hard and successfully to rebuild staff morale. You have promoted staff to provide capacity within the leadership team. This is appreciated by them and is proving to be very effective.

Pupils in the school are provided with a rich learning environment. Although space is at a premium outside, you manage its use skilfully. Pupils have room enough to partake in a range of sporting and practical activities in their unstructured time, overseen by staff, visiting students and pupil play leaders. The curriculum is underpinned by the Christian ethos of the school and promotes respect and tolerance which are attributes displayed by pupils. Pupils are engaged in their learning and ready and keen to be challenged.

The teaching of mathematics has improved considerably since the previous inspection. The leader for mathematics is a skilled practitioner and has ensured that pupils are prepared appropriately for the challenges of the national curriculum, especially at key stage 2. Older pupils have a secure understanding of the basics that underpin the reasoning and problem-solving that is expected. It was noticeable in Year 3 that the most able pupils were holding meaningful and productive

discussions about the potential bonds that could be formed from a range of numbers in a very intellectual way. However, younger pupils are not as secure. Not enough is done to direct children in the early years foundation stage to consider numeracy within play. Some of the teaching in key stage 1 has lacked depth and this has hindered progress for pupils in Year 1. You have worked hard to improve this and some changes are clear to see, such as the better use of teaching assistants to support pupils who are underachieving.

The use of information technology is prevalent in the school. Children in Reception work at phonics programmes online to support their spelling. Further instruction would benefit them when managing new programmes. Teaching incorporates technology regularly which prepares pupils well for the 21st century. In addition, pupils are given good guidance on safety and the dangers of the internet.

Your work to improve teaching has included better use of peer evaluation and marking and pupil choices. This is particularly effective in writing exercises where pupils proofread each other's work and make suggestions. They are aware of the criteria for successful writing across a range of writing tasks. They use this knowledge well in their evaluation of their own and others' work. Pupils in key stage 2 are given good choices for their work which challenge their concepts and thinking. Year 5 pupils were writing about the poem, 'The highwayman', and choosing to do so from different perspectives: Bess, the innkeeper's daughter, the soldiers or the highwayman himself. However, there are not enough opportunities for pupils in Reception to write and so their skills are not developed adequately, especially for the most able. You know that there is more to do in this phase of the school.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

School leaders have created a culture where assessing risk is the norm. For example, leaders carefully monitor the pupils across a public right of way to get to the playground. The personal safety and well-being of pupils are secure. The checks undertaken on staff, visitors and recruitment are stringent. Secure processes are in place for monitoring and recording any safeguarding concerns. Staff are trained in how to keep pupils safe from abuse, sexual exploitation, and from the influence of radical or extreme views. Staff work sensitively with parents and external agencies to monitor and support any vulnerable pupils.

### **Inspection findings**

- We investigated the improvements in writing because this was a weaker area in the end-of-year tests at key stages 1 and 2. You have appointed a new leader for English who is passionate about the subject. She has very good subject knowledge and a clear vision of what needs to be done. Various techniques to support writing have been trialled and evaluated carefully to see what works best with different cohorts. This is improving pupils' achievement. Staff, as well as pupils, have been trained in understanding the grammatical terminology for English. Everyone is using a common language and working well together when considering writing constructively. You have advised, correctly, that extended

writing occurs across the curriculum so that the variety of applications and purposes for writing are focused and realistic. In addition, this provides examples to pupils that will prepare them well for their next stage in education. In key stage 1, more could be done to ensure that pupils do not repeat common errors and spelling mistakes. This is partly due to the lack of writing opportunities in the early years foundation stage.

- Next, we looked at the progress made in key stage 1. Pupils in Year 1 are not developing as quickly because there is variation in the quality of teaching. The leaders of English and mathematics are working with the teachers to modify learning and planning when necessary. This level of support needs to continue. Encouragingly, the Year 3 pupils, who did not do well in their end of key stage tests in summer 2016, are now working at the right level for their age and many are showing greater depth in their work. Teaching in this year group is strong and has helped the pupils catch up.
- You and your leaders work diligently to improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Attendance of these pupils is in line with national averages, this term. The messages that you have sent to parents about the importance of attendance have been accepted and understood.
- You appointed a new special educational needs coordinator in September 2016 who has made improvements in the way disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are taught. Teachers are more aware of these pupils and have clear guidance of what type of learning pupils prefer. Also, teachers know how to adapt teaching for them. The achievement of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is improving but it is not yet on a par with others of similar ability. The inclusive practices that you have introduced are understood by teachers and teaching assistants who work to make sure pupils achieve well regardless of their starting points. This needs to continue to make certain the progress of these pupils matches others soon.
- The final point we discussed is how you are adapting practices for the fluctuations in gender ratios in various year groups: for example, Year 1 has 9% more boys, Year 2 has 5% more girls and Year 5 has 16% more boys. You have made staff very aware of this and, as a result, subject leaders consider carefully the topics to study to make sure there is engagement for pupils and no gender is disadvantaged. This has worked as there is no significant difference in the outcomes of either gender group.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the level of challenge extends into the early years foundation stage and key stage 1 so pupils improve their writing and deepen their learning

- the momentum in teaching and learning continues with regard to diminishing the differences between disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities compared with other pupils.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the trust board, the director of education for the Diocese of Winchester, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Bournemouth. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Kathy Maddocks  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with: you; the vice principal; leaders for mathematics, English, and special educational needs and/or disabilities; the executive officer for the trust, and governors. I met with parents before school and those attending the coffee morning in the department for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. In addition, I met with staff and pupils. I had a telephone conversation with the school improvement adviser. I visited lessons for all classes in the school. I looked at the quality of work in pupils' exercise books. I considered documentary evidence relating to the impact of the school's work, including safeguarding. I took into account 55 responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, and 33 comments written by parents plus the 22 responses from staff and the 80 pupil responses to the Ofsted online survey.