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Robert Veale  
Headteacher  
St John's CofE Aided Primary School  
Markfield Road  
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Dear Mr Veale

### **Short inspection of St John's CofE Aided Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 18 July 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 have established a culture of high ambition, both academically and for pupils' personal qualities. Leaders work effectively as a team to ensure that pupils achieve well and benefit from consistently good teaching. Pupils' progress is tracked carefully and you support teachers to improve successfully through 'recovery plans' if teaching is not good enough.

You provide determined and well-organised leadership. One staff member said, 'There are good systems in place and people work well together.' Governors share your ambition, providing leaders with effective support and challenge to ensure continuous improvement. They work efficiently by focusing acutely on their areas of strategic responsibility. Minutes of governing body meetings reflect the robust level of challenge given to leaders to improve pupils' outcomes and previously identified priorities.

You know your pupils and their families well and have built a strong sense of community. Nearly all parents value the school's work for their children, one saying, 'They [the school] are spot on.' The school has also been recognised for improvements in different areas. Recently, the school achieved several national awards, including the School Games Silver Mark, for the work that leaders do to ensure that pupils are frequently active. There is a strong commitment to developing pupils' wider personal, physical and emotional well-being. Experiences

beyond lessons add to the rich curriculum well. One parent said, 'Extra-curricular clubs have been great.'

You and your staff ensure that the most vulnerable pupils receive good-quality care, guidance and support. Staff show a genuine warmth for the pupils at your school, which pupils reciprocate. Pupils said that they feel safe and know there is a trusted adult on whom they can rely. This leads to a calm and purposeful atmosphere in which pupils do well. Pupils feel that the school has improved over the last two years. One pupil said, 'It is much better now than it used to be.'

Leaders have responded well to the previous inspection findings. Pupils now have good opportunities to solve a wide range of mental mathematics problems and they do so accurately. Pupils also demonstrate a good understanding of the calculations that they need to solve problems in different parts of the mathematics curriculum, for example, in shape and measures. School leaders, including governors, have a clear picture of how well disadvantaged pupils are progressing. This group of pupils achieve well and any previous gap in attainment is diminishing rapidly.

Pupils achieve well overall but there are times in key stages 1 and 2 when the most able pupils are not challenged well enough to think hard. This slows their progress. Pupils' mathematical skills are also slightly behind those displayed in English because learning opportunities are not consistently stretching pupils.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders, including governors, have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. The designated safeguarding officer ensures that referrals to other agencies are swift. Staff undertake training every year to ensure that they are fully aware of the school's procedures. The impact and effectiveness of this training are checked well by leaders. Regular updates ensure that all staff and governors are familiar with the most recent legislation.

There is a strong culture of vigilance to ensure that safeguarding is effective. All the vetting checks on the suitability of staff and volunteers are carried out rigorously. Safeguarding is central to the work of the governing body and governors regularly check the school's work to ensure that pupils are kept safe.

Pupils said that they feel safe and know how to keep themselves safe. All staff make sure that pupils understand the dangers they might face and how to deal with them, for example the potential dangers associated with using the internet. They know to tell a responsible adult, whom they can trust, should they have any concerns. Behaviour is good. Pupils very much enjoy school and they are keen to learn.

## Inspection findings

- This inspection focused on four key lines of enquiry. The first focus was to look at pupils' progress in writing and mathematics in key stage 2, especially for disadvantaged pupils. The second aspect I examined was the effectiveness of phonics teaching in helping pupils to develop good early reading skills. The third focus considered how well leaders have addressed previously low attainment for the middle prior attaining group and disadvantaged pupils at the end of key stage 1. Finally, I evaluated the school's work to reduce absence for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The 2016 published test information showed that pupils had not made enough progress in writing and mathematics. The school's current assessment information and work in pupils' books show that pupils in key stage 2 are now making good progress in writing and mathematics. One parent, describing her son's experience in key stage 2, said, 'I have nothing but praise for the school and everything they have achieved.' Teachers use well-chosen, different texts and topics which engage pupils. As a result, pupils are eager to be writers and problem solvers. However, some of the most able pupils in key stages 1 and 2 are not sufficiently challenged. Their progress slows as a result, most notably in mathematics.
- Disadvantaged pupils achieve well overall in writing and mathematics. Your deputy headteacher's monitoring of their individual needs is meticulous. This means that any dips in achievement are addressed swiftly and effectively through additional support. The senior leaders and the governing body ensure that pupil premium funding is used well, by observing for themselves the interventions to support this group of pupils.
- For the last three years, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1 has been below the national average. In response, the teaching of phonics has been strengthened in the early years and in key stage 1. Many opportunities are now seized to encourage pupils to read aloud from an early stage. Pupils use their understanding of letter sounds in their reading and writing to spell words accurately. For example, children in the Reception classes used this knowledge very effectively as they read a range of questions related to the farm topic they were studying. Children read accurately questions such as, 'How many farm animals can fly?', and 'How many have horns?' Pupils who were not making the progress they should in phonics were quickly identified for individual support. Consequently, this year more pupils at the school met the expected standard for their age. Outcomes were above the national average.
- I examined the attainment of pupils currently in key stage 1 through a scrutiny of pupils' work and found that many pupils are now reaching the expected standard or higher. This is because pupils, including middle-ability pupils are making rapid progress in English and mathematics, as well as in foundation subjects (those other than English, mathematics and science). However, as in key stage 2, there are times when pupils are not sufficiently stretched in their thinking. Consequently, a small minority of pupils do not make as much progress as they

could, and mathematics attainment is behind that for reading and writing.

- Disadvantaged pupils in key stage 1 achieve well. Teachers know their pupils well and support their learning effectively. They have been effective in targeting disadvantaged pupils and providing them with individual and small-group support to ensure that progress is good. Observations of disadvantaged pupils at work in lessons, combined with the school's current information and work in pupils' books confirm this. For example, writing in pupils' books in Year 2 over the last two terms shows that pupils structure sentences more coherently and use more adventurous vocabulary now than at the start of the year.
- My final line of enquiry focused on attendance. This was because it has been below the national average, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders have worked effectively to improve attendance, particularly through working with parents and other agencies. You communicate the importance of regular and punctual attendance clearly and have had some success. You and governors have rightly targeted these groups for further improvement, so that pupils can make consistently strong progress. Consequently, attendance has improved and is in line with the national average.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teaching challenges the most able pupils to think more deeply about their learning and enables them to reach higher standards of attainment
- learning opportunities support and extend pupils' mathematical skills so that attainment in this subject matches that of reading and writing.

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

Yours sincerely

Richard Blackmore  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

We visited lessons together and I met with you several times throughout the day. I also met with the chair of governors and three other governors and had a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority. I spoke with the English and mathematics subject leaders to find out how they performed their leadership roles. I spoke to pupils of all ages, formally and informally, to gain their views of the school. I heard pupils read and observed them in lessons and as they moved

around the school. I took account of the 43 responses to the online questionnaire for staff, the 80 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents and the views parents expressed online or when I met them at the end of the day. I also evaluated the 118 responses by pupils to their Ofsted survey. You and I talked about the improvements that have been made since the previous inspection. I considered documentation relating to governance, the school improvement plan and your own evaluation of the school's effectiveness. I considered your analysis of pupils' recent performance and evaluated safeguarding procedures, including policies to keep children safe and records of training and safeguarding checks. These included procedures relating to attendance and recruitment and vetting procedures.