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Mr Mark Ridlinton
Headteacher
St Richard's CofE First School
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Dear Mr Ridlinton

Short inspection of St Richard's CofE First School

Following my visit to the school on 2 November 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 February 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since your very recent appointment, you have already taken steps to increase the capacity of the leadership team through the appointment of a deputy headteacher.

The school maintained high outcomes for pupils in the most recent assessments in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2. Outcomes have also improved in early years at the end of Reception, including in writing, and are consistently high in phonics in Years 1 and 2.

Assessment information provided by leaders indicates that current pupils, including the most able, are making good progress in most year groups. This was confirmed in books seen during the inspection visit. Pupils are well prepared for middle school by the time they leave at the end of Year 5.

There is a strong ethos of learning in classrooms, where pupils' attitudes ensure that little time is wasted and low-level disruption is rare. Pupils behave well in lessons and outside during breaktimes.

All of the very small number of parents who responded to Parent View were unanimous that they would recommend the school to another parent. All said their children were happy in school and well looked after. Pupils spoken to during the visit confirmed this view. They said they enjoy the wide range of subjects and topics

they are learning about, including French.

When the school was last inspected in 2013, the areas identified for improvement were attendance, the teaching of mathematics, pupils' confidence in speaking in class and their progress in writing. Attendance has been on a three-year improving trend from 2014 to 2016 when it was broadly in line with the national average. Persistent absence fell to below average in 2016. However, there was a dip in overall attendance in 2017. Attendance for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is still not improving quickly enough. Teaching of mathematics, including mastery in the new curriculum, has been a key priority for the school and teachers throughout the school, including in Reception, are now more adept in teaching the subject. Pupils are confident and articulate in lessons and in speaking to adults in other situations. They have made rapid progress in their writing throughout the school.

Your accurate self-evaluation confirms why the school is still good. It recognises that in the following aspects the school still needs to improve further and is not yet outstanding.

- The attendance of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is not yet high enough.
- Disadvantaged pupils are not making as much rapid progress in reading, writing and mathematics in key stage 2 as they are in Reception and key stage 1.
- Leaders and governors have not sufficiently evaluated the impact of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.
- Written feedback to pupils in other subjects is not as consistently in line with the school's policy as it is in English, mathematics and science.
- The indoors environment in early years is in need of refurbishment.
- The school does not meet Department for Education requirements for information schools must publish on their website concerning the pupil premium, the physical education and sports premium, and the special educational needs information report including the school's accessibility plan.

Safeguarding is effective.

A strong culture of safeguarding permeates throughout the school. This is evident in the commitment of leaders, governors and staff to the safety and well-being of pupils. They ensure that it remains their top priority. All pupils spoken to and all parents responding to Parent View agreed that children feel very safe in school. Pupils know what to do if they feel worried by anything and are confident in reporting incidents to adults. They know how to keep themselves safe online. Pupils reported that bullying is very rare but that isolated incidents are dealt with effectively. Leaders keep up to date with training and updates. Governors ensure that leaders carry out their statutory duties effectively to ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose.

Inspection findings

- Outcomes for pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, in reading, writing and mathematics have continued to improve and are consistently above the national average in assessments at the end of Year 2. The school's tracking of current pupils' progress in each year group indicates that pupils are making strong progress in most year groups. Disadvantaged pupils are making very rapid progress in Reception and key stage 1 but it is not so fast in the classes in key stage 2. Pupil premium funding has been targeted mainly at Year 2, which means there has been less emphasis on older pupils in Years 3 to 5. Leaders and governors do not sufficiently evaluate the impact of this funding.
- In Reception, outcomes have continued to improve for children. In the most recent assessments in 2017, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development was significantly higher than the percentage for 2016, which had been slightly below average. Writing, which had been below average in 2015 and 2016, also improved markedly in 2017. Teachers ensure that children get off to a good start with their writing by ensuring that children apply their rapidly developing phonics skills to their work. After just a couple of months, some pupils have moved on from mark-making to constructing simple sentences. Children benefit from an attractive and stimulating outdoors environment that enhances their learning. The indoors environment is less well developed, however, where there are limited opportunities for technology and computing.
- Pupils benefit from a wide-ranging curriculum that includes the study of French. Through topic work, such as that on the Romans, pupils have gained in their understanding of history. Similarly, through their study of rivers, their understanding of geography has developed. Pupils have discrete books for their science and religious education work. In science, they have carried out a number of investigations including on the properties of materials. Pupils have a good understanding of the similarities and differences between other religions, including Islam and Hinduism. They have a good understanding of the wider world from their studies of other countries such as Italy. They are using information technology well for their research into chocolate.
- Teachers plan well to ensure that pupils have a good grounding in literacy and numeracy. They are confident in teaching mathematics mastery to enable pupils to work at greater depth in set activities, such as work on shapes, and through extension tasks. In literacy, pupils have opportunities for writing in a range of genres including story writing, poetry and factual reports. Written feedback is consistent with the school policy in English, mathematics and science and provides pupils with clear indications on how they can improve their work. However, it is less consistent in other subjects.
- The small numbers of pupils on the special educational needs register are making progress in line with other pupils in the school because of effective support and planning for their needs. However, evaluation by leaders and governors of the impact of funding for these pupils is underdeveloped. There have been changes to leadership following the recent departure of the special educational needs coordinator. The role is currently split between three members of staff and, as a

result, overall oversight is not sufficiently clear.

- Attendance improved after the last inspection and by 2016 was broadly in line with the national average. The proportion of persistent absence fell and was below the national average. However, in the most recent academic year levels of overall absence rose again. Governors are not sufficiently aware that the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is not improving rapidly enough. As a result, they are not holding leaders to account for this.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities improves more rapidly
- disadvantaged pupils make as much rapid progress in reading, writing and mathematics in key stage 2 as they do in Reception and key stage 1
- they evaluate the impact of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities more effectively
- written feedback to pupils in other subjects is as consistent as it is in English, mathematics and science
- the indoors environment in early years is improved
- the school meets requirements for information schools must publish on their website
- governors hold leaders to account more rigorously for pupils' attendance.

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

Yours sincerely

Mark Sims
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met you and other members of staff. I also spoke to the chair of the governing body and three other governors. I spoke to a representative of the local authority by telephone. I conducted a learning walk of four lessons with you and a scrutiny of pupils' work, focusing on writing and other subjects in the curriculum. I observed pupils as they moved around the school and met with a group of pupils to establish their views about the school. I scrutinised the school's self-evaluation and pupil performance information, as well as safeguarding and child

protection records. I analysed the 16 responses to the online Parent View. There were no responses to Parent View free text or to the pupil and staff surveys.

The inspection visit focused on the impact of the pupil premium in improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils, the teaching of writing in Reception, the culture of safeguarding, the leadership of special educational needs, the steps the school is taking to promote attendance, especially for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils, and the effectiveness of the school's provision for languages and other foundation subjects in the curriculum.