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Mrs Colette Firth
Executive Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Firth

Short inspection of St John's Church School

Following my visit to the school on 15 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 July 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 your senior leaders have successfully managed a move into a new building. Pupils now benefit from a spacious and vibrant learning environment, which provides rich experiences and enhances their learning in many ways. St John's Church School is warm, welcoming and caring and values all pupils equally. You have established a culture which aspires to provide the very best for all pupils who attend. There is a clear sense of teamwork and staff are proud to work in the school. The strong school values permeate all aspects of school life and contribute to the positive attitudes of staff and pupils alike. All pupils I spoke to say that they enjoy coming to school.

The governing body is highly committed to the school. Governors are able to hold you to account because they ensure that they are well informed about all aspects of school life. They have an accurate picture of how well pupils are doing because they visit the school regularly and meet frequently with senior leaders.

Parents I spoke to confirmed pupils' views that the school is a happy and safe place. One commented about her children that 'they are unhappy when Saturday comes'. Only a small number of parents responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. The majority who did so said that they would recommend the school to other

parents. A very few indicated that they felt their concerns were not always dealt with quickly enough. One or two of the parents I spoke to also mentioned this. We discussed this, and you shared documentation demonstrating how concerns are followed up. It is clear that any issues raised by parents are dealt with very swiftly and appropriately and that parents are always involved in this process. However, we agreed that some parents may not be fully aware of all the work the school is doing to support their children and that there is work to be done in this area. Your most recent school survey to ascertain parents' views, which includes a high number of responses, indicates that almost all parents are happy with how the school responds to any concerns they raise and would recommend the school to another parent.

You provide pupils with a rich and engaging curriculum. They benefit from specialist teachers for art, music and sport. During the inspection, pupils across the school took part in hockey sessions and even the youngest demonstrated impressive dribbling skills using real hockey sticks. During an art lesson, pupils were totally absorbed when learning about the use of watercolours, linked to their topic about the Antarctic. Pupils also have access to a range of activities and clubs outside of school. This curriculum successfully supports pupils' personal development and well-being. The provision of breakfast ensures that all pupils start the day in a good position to learn. You provide blazers and ties for pupils in Year 6, which they wear with great pride. Together with the strong links you have with the local secondary school, this helps to prepare pupils well for the next stage in their education.

Pupils' behaviour around the school and in classrooms is never less than exemplary. They appreciate what their teachers do for them. They show a high degree of respect for one another, regardless of individual background, race or religion.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You and other leaders have ensured that all safeguarding records are detailed and of high quality. The school completes appropriate checks on staff, governors, supply teachers and regular visitors to the school to ensure that they are suitable to work with children. Access to the school site is well managed and arrangements for visitors to enter the school building are secure.

Effective and up-to-date training ensures that all staff are fully aware of how to act should they have concerns about any child and what appropriate action to take when necessary. Leaders provide high levels of care for all pupils and work very effectively with outside agencies, when required, to support pupils who are vulnerable or who have additional needs.

Attendance is above average, reflecting pupils' enjoyment of coming to school. There are rigorous systems in place to follow up swiftly on any absence. Additionally, there is highly effective support for pupils and their families to ensure good attendance.

Pupils feel safe in school and say that there are adults they can go to if they feel

sad or worried. Pupils know about e-safety and how to keep safe online. They understand what bullying is and say that, on the rare occasions this happens, it is dealt with swiftly by staff so it does not become a problem.

Inspection findings

- In order to ascertain that the school remains good, I first focused on pupils' outcomes across the school. This is because, in the past, outcomes at the end of the early years and at the end of key stage 1 have been below average. Outcomes at the end of key stage 2 have been at least in line with those seen nationally. However, in 2016, pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2 dipped. Additionally, the proportion of pupils who exceed age-related expectations in reading, writing and mathematics has been below average at the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2.
- We looked at the most recent data for pupils' outcomes in national tests in 2017, school tracking data and work in pupils' books. Your 2017 assessment results show that, in Year 6, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard for their age rose substantially from that seen in 2016 to be above average in reading, writing and mathematics. The school has received recognition from the local authority for this.
- Work in pupils' books and school internal tracking data for pupils in the current Year 6 class support your predictions that the improvements seen in 2017 will be at least maintained for this cohort.
- The majority of children start the early years with skills that are below those typically seen. The proportion who achieve a good level of development at the end of the early years is below average but shows steady improvement, which is being maintained in 2017. From their starting points, this represents good progress. We saw that children in the current Reception Year have settled well into routines. They benefit from rich and stimulating provision both inside and out, which meets their different needs appropriately. All adults know children very well and plan engaging activities which move learning on effectively. This ensures that all children make good progress from their starting points.
- At the end of Year 2 in 2017, assessment results showed improvement on those seen in 2016, including at greater depth, despite remaining below average. However, a higher proportion of children met age-related expectations than at the end of their Reception Year. This represents good progress for these children. A reorganised approach to teaching is enabling pupils currently in key stage 1 to benefit from high-quality additional support. This is enabling more to make accelerated progress. Consequently, the proportion of pupils on track to reach and exceed age-related expectations has increased. You predict that this is likely to be above average at both the expected level and for greater depth. Work in pupils' books and internal tracking information support this prediction.
- A further line of enquiry was to check whether all areas for improvement identified at the time of the previous inspection have been addressed effectively. Additionally, I wanted to ascertain whether there was evidence that school leaders have the capacity to maintain and build upon existing improvements.

- You have taken successful action to improve pupils' letter formation and have recently introduced approaches to improve this further. Across the school, it is evident that the most able pupils are being challenged and, as a result, the proportion of pupils who are exceeding age-related expectations is increasing.
- Your innovative use of funding ensures a high ratio of adults to pupils. Across all year groups, consistently good teaching is securing effective development of pupils' reading, writing and mathematical skills and good opportunities to apply these in other curriculum areas. Pupils' mathematics work reflects the emphasis on improving reasoning and problem-solving and the drive to ensure that more pupils exceed age-related expectations. Recent initiatives in the teaching of reading are ensuring that pupils are being helped to catch up and develop effective reading and comprehension skills. Across the school, the enjoyment of reading is consistently promoted, including through attractive age-appropriate reading areas. Your new approach to the teaching of handwriting is showing a clear impact, with children from the Reception Year upwards using a cursive script. Strong leadership in all areas and accurate checking mean that there is good capacity to sustain improvements.
- Despite the improvements seen, we agreed that there is still work to be done to ensure that more pupils exceed age-related expectations, especially at the end of key stage 1. Your new initiatives need more time to have an impact to ensure that this is the case. Additionally, although teaching and learning across the school are good, not all are as consistently strong as the best.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- increase the proportion of pupils who exceed age-related expectations by continuing to implement new initiatives for teaching mathematics and handwriting
- ensure that all teachers benefit from opportunities to learn from the best practice within the school, so that teaching and learning are even better
- implement plans to further improve communication with parents, so that all are clear about the positive actions you are taking to support their children.

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

Yours sincerely

Joan Beale
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, the head of school, senior leaders and three members of the governing body. I also held a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority. You and I visited classrooms together to observe teaching and learning and looked at the work in pupils' books in a range of subjects. I met with a group of pupils to talk about their experiences at school and also spoke with pupils informally during the day.

I scrutinised safeguarding policies and practice and considered a wide range of other documentation. This included the school's own evaluation of its work, plans for improvement and reports to governors. I also evaluated documentation in relation to pupils' attainment and progress.

I took account of 16 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 13 comments received electronically. Additionally, I spoke with 21 parents when they were delivering their children to school and received two letters from parents. I further considered 26 responses to the staff questionnaire.