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Mr Roger Averis
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Averis

Short inspection of St John's CofE Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 5 December 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 May 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

This is a school that enacts its core values of 'developing unique, confident and happy children within an exceptional Christian learning community, preparing and empowering them for life in a changing world'. You, your staff, pupils, governors and parents are rightly proud of the caring, respectful and nurturing culture, rooted in Christianity, which characterises the school. Pupils and staff alike were pleased to show me what they were doing. This reflects a clear and shared sense of pride in their school community.

You lead the school with energy and enthusiasm. You ensure that this large school is a harmonious community. You have successfully addressed the areas for improvement from the last inspection. You were able to explain clearly to me the many strengths of the school, as well as the areas that still need to be developed. You and other senior leaders have evaluated the school accurately and have the capacity to make improvements successfully.

The leadership of teaching is strong. Improving the quality of teaching and learning is at the heart of the school's work. There are effective systems in place to check that teaching is consistently good across the school. All teachers are committed to improvement. Learning activities are creatively and imaginatively designed to capture and hold pupils' interests. As a result, pupils work hard and are enthusiastic

and confident learners. Pupils' excellent attitudes have a strong impact on their learning and development. You have established good links with your local cluster of schools, including the local secondary school. This highlights your willingness to work with others to enhance teachers' knowledge and skills and ultimately improve outcomes for pupils.

A Nursery unit opened in September 2017. Parents speak highly about the extremely caring and nurturing ethos which enables children to thrive. Staff have a good understanding of how young children learn. The many learning opportunities embrace children's own ideas and interests and are highly engaging. For example, children were captivated by a letter they had received from Santa. They were eager to reply to his letter and this prompted high levels of engagement in mark-making and drawing. Children feel valued and are confident, independent learners who make good progress.

You enjoy a good reputation within the local community. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. They hold you in high regard. All parents whom I spoke with would recommend the school to others. This is because parents value the high standards of care, support and guidance which the school provides to pupils and their families. As one parent explained, 'Children are at the heart of this school and everything is done to help them be the best they can be.'

Safeguarding is effective.

A strong culture of safeguarding is woven through all aspects of the school's work. The deputy headteacher has invested considerable time in ensuring that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are of the highest quality. The single central record indicates that all required checks are made to ensure that staff and volunteers are suitable to work with children. You ensure that staff receive the required training, including training relating to protecting pupils from extremism and radicalisation. All staff are highly vigilant and well aware of the actions they need to take if they think a child protection issue has arisen.

Pupils say that they feel safe and if they have any worries they know whom to go to for help. Pupils behave extremely well in lessons and around the school. They play well together, respect each other and follow the school's rules. The school's records show that any issues are followed up promptly and extensively. Any pupil absence is followed up quickly, with particular attention paid to any trends or patterns of absence that cause concern. Parents told me that you do everything possible to ensure that their children are safe, happy and well.

Inspection findings

- You are providing the school with strong, purposeful and effective leadership. You are well supported by capable senior and middle leaders. Your vision is shared by all staff, governors and pupils. As a result, pupils make good progress, behave well and enjoy learning together.
- Governors are a keen, dedicated and effective team who know the school well.

They are committed to ensuring that the school provides a good education so that pupils can achieve well academically and personally. Governors ask challenging questions of senior leaders to ensure that they have a good understanding of all areas of the school's work. In addition, they visit the school regularly to gain first-hand knowledge of what is happening on the ground.

- All of the school's work is sprinkled with references to its Christian values and beliefs. This successfully supports pupils to be responsible citizens, through understanding that the values and beliefs associated with their school are shared within British culture.
- Leaders have taken decisive action since September to address the weak performance in writing at the end of Year 2 in 2017. The English leader has enthusiastically led the introduction of a new strategy for writing across the school. This has led to marked improvement in pupils' work this term. For example, Year 1 pupils were using improved sentence structures and exciting vocabulary when writing information for their memory boxes. In Year 2, pupils' books show that they are developing a clearer understanding of how to plan and organise their writing. Consequently, pupils are making better progress. However, you know that this remains a key priority for school improvement.
- Leaders are committed to improving the life chances for disadvantaged pupils. This is evident in your success over the last two years to narrow the gap in progress and attainment for those pupils in reading and mathematics at the end of key stage 2. You acknowledge, however, that the gaps are not closing as quickly for those pupils in writing. As a result, they are not reaching the standards of which they are capable.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning and their behaviour around school are consistently good and often exemplary. In lessons, pupils sustain good concentration and try hard with their work. In the playground at break- and lunchtimes, pupils' behaviour is calm and considerate. Their conduct reflects the school's strong Christian ethos and effective strategies to promote high standards of behaviour.
- Pupils' opinions and views are valued at St John's. Pupils enjoy meaningful opportunities to contribute to the life of the school. The school council plays an important part in school improvement planning. Ministers from the council meet regularly with staff to discuss issues. This contributes strongly to their mature attitudes, high levels of confidence and sense of responsibility. Pupils are proud ambassadors for their school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils reach as high a standard in writing as they do in reading at the end of key stage 1
- they continue to extend strategies to enable disadvantaged pupils to make the progress of which they are capable in writing.

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

Yours sincerely

Dorothy Bathgate
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, your senior and middle leaders, three representatives of the governing body, a representative of the local authority and a group of pupils. I visited a number of classes to see pupils and staff at work. I observed pupils' behaviour around the school, at breaktimes and during lessons. I met a number of parents informally at the beginning of the school day. I considered the views of 108 parents posted on Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, as well as the 102 responses parents made using the free-text service. I also considered the 26 responses to the pupil survey and the 20 responses to the staff survey. I evaluated a range of documents, including safeguarding records and policies.