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Mr Shaw Goodwin
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Goodwin

Short inspection of St Christopher's Church of England School

Following my visit to the school on 28 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in May 2010.

This school continues to be good.

You have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection and have addressed the areas needing improvement at that time. St Christopher's is a happy school. Staff enjoy teaching the pupils, parents value your work, and pupils and staff are proud of their school. This is a result of the high expectations and the positive ethos that you have developed in the school over time. Almost every parent who talked to me, or who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire, recognised your commitment to the school and to its families. One parent told me, 'Mr Goodwin is the children's rock; actually, he's my rock too.'

Many parents commend the school for its excellent pastoral support and pupils spoke very highly of 'Deb's den', the school's nurture room, in which any pupil who is feeling vulnerable can talk to a trained member of staff. For example, some pupils told me that they feel anxious when their parents are called for active service in the armed forces. These pupils greatly appreciate the opportunities to talk to someone who helps them to recognise and manage their feelings.

The number of pupils in each year group varies greatly. A high proportion of children leave and join the school each year. Your welcoming approach and lively interest in each family helps pupils to settle quickly and respond to the school's high expectations for behaviour and learning.

Pupils behave well in class and around the school. They listen carefully to staff and to each other in lessons. They are interested in, and sometimes excited by, the

work that they do. During social times, pupils are usually sensible, even when the outside space available to them is restricted in the winter months. Differences between individuals are accepted, and rare instances of bullying are dealt with quickly and effectively by staff. Pupils have a clear understanding of the difference between bullying and 'falling out'. One pupil stated clearly that 'bullying is an overused term in this school', and other pupils agreed. They know to ask for help from their peers to restore good relations when things go wrong.

Children make rapid progress in the early years and are very well prepared for entry into Year 1. Outcomes at the end of the Reception Year are consistently high, and the proportion of children reaching a good level of development continues to be well above the national average. Pupils attain high standards at the end of key stage 1. The proportions of pupils who reach the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics are often higher than the national average. Standards at the end of Year 6 are usually in line with or above national figures. However, published data suggests that pupils' progress at key stage 2 has not been as strong as might be expected in the recent past. While there are reasons to explain this, not least the impact of pupil turnover and small cohorts, you have not been complacent, and have worked with your middle leaders to take appropriate action to improve learning. There are positive signs of improvement, but the full impact of the steps taken is not yet evident.

Governors receive information about pupils' outcomes and the actions being taken to improve learning. Governors regularly challenge school leaders, but in doing so rely too much on the information you provided by the headteacher. School development plans do not identify targets or milestones for improving pupils' progress in writing and mathematics in key stage 2. This makes it difficult for governors to hold senior leaders to account for the impact of their actions.

Safeguarding is effective.

Governors and senior leaders are committed to keeping pupils safe. They are quick to respond to changes to statutory requirements, ensuring that staff are trained appropriately. The governor with responsibility for safeguarding has conducted an extremely thorough audit and has ensured that everything is in order.

Pupils' well-being is given the highest priority. Leaders keep policies and procedures under regular review. They ensure that record keeping is comprehensive so that, where necessary, effective and prompt action is taken and has a positive effect on pupils' safety and well-being. You work well with parents, listening to concerns and addressing them appropriately. This feeds into extremely detailed knowledge about each pupil, including their individual strengths and weaknesses. Consequently, any pupil at risk is quickly identified and appropriate action is taken to keep them safe.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection I looked at the improvements made to teaching and learning in reading, and the impact of actions taken to ensure better progress in

writing and mathematics, in key stage 2; the breadth and design of the curriculum; the teaching of phonics; and how well the Oxford Diocesan Schools Trust has supported the school since it joined the multi-academy trust in 2015.

- You identified reading as an area for improvement last year following the 2016 key stage 2 results. Together with staff, you decided to change the way reading was taught. The English leader introduced a new approach, designed to provide greater challenge, promote deeper thinking and develop a greater enjoyment of reading. Progress has improved as a result. In 2017, provisional results show the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard at the end of key stage 2 was in line with the national average. The proportion achieving knowledge, skills and understanding at the higher standard was above the national figure.
- The progress made by pupils reaching the end of key stage 2 in 2017 in writing and mathematics was disappointing. In part, the reasons are specific to the cohort. Nevertheless, leaders have taken effective action to identify gaps in pupils' mathematical knowledge and understanding and to ensure that teaching is addressing these effectively. Teachers have received further training on the effective teaching of writing and additional support has been provided for pupils capable of making better progress. You have also introduced a system to assess carefully the high number of pupils who join the school at the start of key stage 2. The quality of teaching and learning is carefully monitored and you hold termly progress meetings with each teacher to review, in detail, how actions taken have helped pupils.
- Encouragingly, monitoring records and pupils' work show that the teaching of mathematics and writing in key stage 2 is now strong and that progress is improving. However, too much relies on you analysing data yourself. Middle leaders do not yet use the range of information available to them to confidently identify issues and take the lead on actions to address them.
- I saw evidence that pupils receive a broad and balanced curriculum, with a clear commitment to ensuring pupils' personal safety and well-being. You have plans to ensure a greater level of challenge throughout the foundation subjects and this is being introduced in phases. Appropriate plans are in place to prioritise physical education, religious education and outdoor learning, and you are exploring a variety of ways to assess these subjects.
- In 2017, there was a fall in the proportion of Year 1 pupils meeting the standard in the phonics screening check. You acted decisively by asking your senior teacher to have oversight of the teaching of phonics and the actions required to improve outcomes. She did so accurately, led staff training, and is checking carefully how well pupils are acquiring new skills. Pupils in Year 1 and Year 2 are making good progress.
- Since the school became part of the Oxford Diocesan Schools Trust, half-termly visits from trust officers have ensured that the school continues to meet all statutory requirements. More recently they have supported the development of your middle leaders' skills. The trust also offers training for all teachers and governors in an increasing range of subject areas. Plans are in place to offer additional, bespoke support for the school from January 2018, based on its current priorities for improvement.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- middle leaders develop their understanding of school information so that they can take responsibility for accurately identifying strengths and what needs to improve
- plans for further support for the school are implemented and monitored carefully to ensure that recent improvements in teaching and learning are sustained and built on
- governors have the range of information they need to hold leaders fully to account.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the director of education for the Diocese of Oxford and the regional schools commissioner. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Clare Morgan
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and governors to review your evaluation of the school's effectiveness. You and I visited classes at work across the school. I looked at a range of work in pupils' books, spoke to pupils around the school and met the diocesan trust's school improvement adviser. I met parents before school and scrutinised 43 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including free-text comments. I also looked at the results of Ofsted's staff and pupil surveys, and at pupils' views from the school's questionnaire at the beginning of 2017. I looked at a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation and development plan, and checked the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements, including those related to recruitment.