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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
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Mrs Ania Vaughan  
Headteacher  
Christ Church CofE (VA) Primary School and Nursery, Ware  
New Road  
Ware  
Hertfordshire  
SG12 7BT

Dear Mrs Vaughan

### **Short inspection of Christ Church CofE (VA) Primary School and Nursery, Ware**

Following my visit to the school on 11 January 2018, 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 2014.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

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

You provide calm, stable leadership and you ensure that decisions are taken which promote the best interests of every pupil. This is a school whose values are consciously rooted in its Christian ethos. You make sure that staff, pupils and families are well supported and treated with kindness and respect. Staff enjoy working at this school and pupils, parents and carers feel pleased and proud to be members of this school community.

Parents, carers and grandparents I spoke to informally at the start of the day were extremely pleased with the school. Typical comments included 'My child loves coming to this school' and 'The staff are so approachable and there is a really warm, welcoming and inclusive atmosphere.' These views were endorsed by the overwhelming majority of the 102 parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and by the very large majority of parents who texted about their perceptions of the school.

Pupils behave extremely well in lessons and around school. They are polite and courteous to each other, as well as to staff and visitors.

Since the previous inspection, you have improved the leadership of the early years, and introduced new approaches which give pupils more confidence and stamina in

their writing. You have strengthened the quality of feedback teachers provide to pupils. You have ensured that subject leaders are more influential, playing a stronger role in monitoring pupils' progress and training staff. You have made good use of the support you have received from Herts for Learning, and this has improved the quality of professional development and training that have been provided to staff, especially in the Nursery and Reception classes. Your decision, supported by the governors, to invest in improvements to the library, including purchasing lots of new books, has helped establish a strong culture of reading.

Governors' decisions are based on accurate information about the school's key priorities. They visit the school regularly, and they have a secure understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Governors offer a good level of both support and professional challenge to school leaders. Governors recognise and appreciate the dedication and commitment shown by leaders, and the hard work and enthusiasm of all members of staff. They rightly have great confidence in you, appreciating the pivotal role you continue to play in creating a happy, friendly and successful school.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose, and records of staff's suitability to work with children are clear and well organised. Staff understand their role in keeping pupils safe at school. There are well-understood systems in place for staff to report any concerns, and the designated safeguarding leaders liaise appropriately with other agencies.

The pupils I spoke to informally around the school told me that they feel safe and happy at school. Parents' views were also positive. The vast majority agreed that pupils are safe and well cared for at school, with many choosing to express how secure and assured their children feel.

### **Inspection findings**

- To ascertain whether the school remained good, one of my key lines of enquiry was about the steps leaders and managers have taken to improve the school since the previous inspection. You have improved teaching and leadership in the early years and, as a result, children settle quickly into the Nursery and Reception classes, and make good progress from their different starting points. The acting early years leader has an accurate understanding of the strengths of the provision, and a clear plan to improve children's learning and development.
- You have also taken steps to improve subject leadership, and teachers make a strong contribution to school improvement by helping to train and support colleagues, and by monitoring the quality of pupils' work in different subjects.
- You have worked hard to secure high standards in pupils' reading. Reading is taught well, and teachers have good subject knowledge, making reading lessons interesting and challenging. As a result, pupils make excellent progress, often performing well above average in national tests at the end of key stage 2.

- Standards in writing, however, are broadly average. When we looked at topic books, we agreed that there is scope for pupils to write in more depth, especially in subjects such as geography and history. In these subjects, pupils' written work does not consistently reflect the high expectations seen in English books.
- Your own assessments have shown that spelling across the school is not as strong as it could be. You have recently introduced a new approach to the teaching of spelling, in order to give pupils more opportunities to apply their spelling knowledge in their written work.
- My second line of enquiry was about the level of challenge offered to pupils in mathematics. Progress in mathematics was not strong enough in the most recent national tests for 11-year-olds. This is something which you have already identified, and you have taken steps to rectify the situation. You have introduced a new approach that has been designed to secure more robust mathematical understanding, while offering additional challenge to pupils of all abilities.
- When I visited classrooms to see this new approach being taught, it was clear that pupils were enjoying the new structure to the lessons, and making good progress. In one lesson, for example, Year 5 and 6 pupils were confidently able to explain how to order fractions and how to recognise whether a three-digit number was divisible by four or eight. In a Year 6 class, I saw how regular, weekly arithmetic lessons help improve pupils' skills and confidence as they apply their number skills to solve problems.
- Nevertheless, this new approach to the teaching of mathematics is very new, and there has not been enough time for its impact to be seen in formal tests and assessments. We agreed that it will be important for you to continue this work so that, by the time pupils reach the end of key stage 2, their progress in mathematics should be above the national average.
- My next line of enquiry was about the support you offer to disadvantaged pupils, and the impact this has on their progress and attendance. There are a relatively small number of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium, and the support for them is carefully planned and meets their needs well. The evidence seen in lessons, and in pupils' books, shows that these vulnerable pupils are making good progress in their learning. Their attendance is monitored regularly and is improving.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- new approaches to the teaching of mathematics are embedded, in order to increase the percentage of pupils who make good progress, especially at key stage 2
- standards in writing are further improved by:
  - securing recent changes to the teaching of spelling

- ensuring that teachers share the same high expectations for the quality of writing pupils can produce in their topic work.

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

Yours sincerely

Nicholas Rudman  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

I met with you to discuss the school's priorities for development and the impact of actions taken. I also met the leaders who have responsibility for early years and mathematics. I met with three governors, including the chair. I spoke on the telephone to the Hertfordshire improvement partner. I scrutinised a variety of sources of information, including the school's self-evaluation, minutes of meetings of the governing body, plans and records for the use of additional funding and the school's assessment information. I checked the school's safeguarding and child protection procedures, the records of checks leaders make on the suitability of staff to work with children and information relating to attendance. We undertook joint observations of learning across the school, looked at work in pupils' books and spoke with pupils about their learning during lessons. I analysed information from Parent View, Ofsted's online system for collecting the views of parents, including responses received by free text. I also analysed responses from staff giving their views of the school.