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Mrs Julie Dunbar  
Headteacher  
Stretton Handley Church of England Primary School  
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Woolley Moor  
Alfreton  
Derbyshire  
DE55 6FH

Dear Mrs Dunbar

### **Short inspection of Stretton Handley Church of England Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 16 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 September 2013.

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

You and the leadership team have maintained the good quality of education at the school since the previous inspection. You appreciate the challenges and the benefits of leading a small, rural school and you have made sure that the school continues to improve. The school's motto of 'growing, caring and learning together' is at the heart of everything that you do. You have created a positive, nurturing community. There is a healthy balance between compassion for the pupils and ambition for what they can each achieve in the future.

You know the school well and lead it with energy and a clear sense of purpose. The school's distinctive ethos and strong values underpin your day-to-day work and help to identify the school's long-term priorities. Under your leadership, the teachers have developed their skills and they have taken on more leadership responsibilities. Staff who responded to the online survey are extremely positive and say you lead and manage the school well. Staff feel valued and are proud to work at the school.

Your self-evaluation of the school is detailed and accurate. You have a good range of evidence to support the school's strengths and weaknesses. Your plans for school improvement are thorough and include detailed success criteria. We agreed that the school's self-evaluation form and the school improvement plan could be more succinct.

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school. They are united in their views that their children are happy, safe and well looked after. Parents think

staff teach their children well so that they make good progress. A small number of parents said that they would like more information about their children's progress. Several parents commented that you and your staff give the pupils extra support. The vast majority of parents would recommend the school to others. One parent simply said this is 'a fantastic school'.

Staff at the school have made sure that the environment is welcoming and attractive. Pupils respect their surroundings. Teachers display pupils' work and pictures on every wall. For example, a display called 'all creatures great and small' shows how pupils make use of the school's outdoor environment to explore the natural world. Pupils' high attendance, above the national average, indicates that they enjoy being at school. Older pupils like taking on more responsibilities. For example, Year 5 and Year 6 pupils run the school's tuck shop and they decide how to spend the profits. At lunchtimes, Year 5 and Year 6 'play leaders' organise activities for younger pupils. Pupils at your school care about, and look after, each other.

Pupils who I spoke with are certain that no bullying takes place in school. Staff rapidly sort out any issues if pupils do fall out with each other. Staff value pupils' opinions and views. Each week, pupils can nominate each other for a 'special mention' award to celebrate a particular success. Pupils' behaviour is excellent, showing that they understand your values and ethos. Relationships between teachers and pupils are good. Pupils are respectful and enthusiastic learners because teachers plan engaging lessons. Almost all pupils work hard and they enjoy opportunities to contribute to the life of the school.

The governing body is passionate about the school. As one governor said, 'We are proud to be a part of this school.' Governors understand the role that they play in supporting you. At the end of every governors' meeting they ask, 'What have we achieved to improve the outcomes for children?' The governing body has a new chair of governors and three new governors. At present, therefore, governors' understanding of, for example, pupil outcomes and how you spend additional government funding is not as detailed as it should be.

You have a good understanding of the progress individual pupils are currently making and you discuss this progress regularly with staff. Some teachers use information about pupils' progress to ensure that learning is well matched to pupils' needs and abilities. For example, in a Year 5 and Year 6 mathematics lesson, we observed the teacher give more focused support to some pupils initially, so that all of the pupils made progress with their learning. This does not happen in all of the lessons.

Another area for improvement from the previous inspection involved encouraging boys' writing skills. Teachers have introduced new topics to encourage boys with their writing. We read some well-planned adventure stories from Year 5 and Year 6 boys showing a range of writing techniques, accurate spellings and complex grammar. In Years 3 and 4, boys' writing skills are not developing as well. Boys' writing remains a priority for leaders.

At the previous inspection, inspectors also asked leaders to improve the attitudes to learning of a small number of boys. Leaders have obtained extra external support for some boys who have more challenging behaviour that may affect their learning. Teachers are using a range of different activities to support them. However, we saw some boys become distracted from the learning task in lessons and this had an impact on the quality and quantity of work they produced. This area remains an issue for the school.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Pupils said, with certainty, that they feel safe at the school. They know what cyber bullying means and they know how to stay safe online. Pupils can quote the telephone number for 'ChildLine' and they understand how the charity can help them. They have also carried out their own site survey to make sure that the school is secure.

You ensure that all checks are in place before an adult starts working or volunteering at the school. Staff and governors are aware of their duty to safeguard pupils. They receive relevant and up-to-date training, including training relating to protecting pupils from extremism and radicalisation. You are attending to the matter of ensuring that new governors have completed the necessary training.

Although you have had very few safeguarding referrals, you have ensured that a strong safeguarding culture exists within the school. Pupils' safeguarding records are stored securely and the school's safeguarding policy is fit for purpose.

### **Inspection findings**

- You encourage the teachers to deliver high-quality teaching in their lessons and this has a positive impact on how well pupils achieve. We observed some good examples of teachers matching learning activities to pupils' individual needs. However, this was not the case in all of the lessons seen. When pupils cannot complete the learning activity without additional support, their progress is slower.
- In 2017, no boys in key stages 1 or 2 achieved the higher standard in writing. You have already started strategies to improve boys' writing skills and we saw evidence that they are having an impact, particularly in Years 5 and 6. These boys are writing with more confidence and they use an increased variety of writing techniques to achieve the higher standard. In Years 5 and 6, boys are making more rapid progress in writing and are keeping up with the girls. Boys in lower year groups are not making as much progress in their writing as they should. All pupils, including boys, do not get enough opportunities to practise their extended writing skills in subjects other than English. Too few homework tasks have an extended writing focus.
- A small minority of boys are not able to maintain a positive attitude to learning. While the majority of pupils' behaviour in lessons is excellent, sometimes these boys allow themselves to become distracted from the activity. As a result, they do not always produce work that is as good as it could be. You have already

begun to teach this group of pupils the skills they need to be effective learners. You agree that these boys continue to need support.

- In 2017, the proportions of key stage 2 pupils who achieved the expected and the higher standards in mathematics was at or above the national averages. Girls and the most able pupils did not make as much progress as other pupils. We saw in current key stage 2 books that all pupils have made progress in mathematics since the start of the academic year. Often, girls and the more able pupils are completing the tasks in full. Teachers are not then encouraging them to try more challenging activities, for example, involving reasoning or problem-solving skills. These pupils are not making as much progress as they could.
- You provide pupils with a broad and balanced curriculum. Pupils study a wide range of topics, many of which involve them in trips and visits. For example, the 'under water worlds' topic includes a river walk, while 'from tractor to table' includes a visit to a farm. You make sure that your pupils benefit from a wide range of extra-curricular activities involving music and sports. As a school, you have been successful in gaining credit for your work across a number of curriculum areas, for example, the religious education gold mark and the eco-award.
- Pupils have a good knowledge of different faiths and cultures and show an understanding and acceptance of these. Pupils care about other people beyond the school. For example, I observed collective worship where pupils were discussing how they could raise money for a school in Kolkata. You encourage a sense of social responsibility in your pupils and pupils know that their views matter.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers reinforce existing good practice in writing in other subjects in the wider curriculum, with a particular focus on engaging boys
- key stage 2 teachers set more challenging work in mathematics, especially for girls and the most able, leading to more pupils making faster progress and reaching the higher standard of attainment.

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

Rachel Tordoff  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with you and, in your role as the leader of literacy, we also met with the leader of mathematics. I met with five members of the governing body and I held a telephone conversation with the chair of governors. I also met with a representative of the local authority.

I visited six lessons with you. I observed pupils' behaviour around the school and during lessons and I spoke with a group of pupils. I scrutinised a selection of pupils' workbooks with you.

I met a number of parents informally at the beginning of the school day and I took into account the 20 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including 13 comments. I also considered the four responses to the staff questionnaire.

I evaluated a range of information, including the school's self-evaluation, the school's improvement plan, documents relating to safeguarding and minutes of meetings of the governing body. In addition, I looked at information about the school's use of additional government funding and information relating to pupils' achievement, attendance and behaviour, as well as a selection of school policies.