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Mr Tony Walker
Headteacher
Farnsfield St Michael's Church of England Primary (Voluntary Aided) School
Branston Avenue
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Dear Mr Walker

Short inspection of Farnsfield St Michael's Church of England Primary (Voluntary Aided) School

Following my visit to the school on 30 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 June 2014.

This school continues to be good.

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

The warm and welcoming atmosphere in the school is underpinned by a strong Christian ethos and values, such as respect, forgiveness and perseverance. These values are well understood by all members of the school community and are visibly lived out in the day-to-day life of the school. As a result, pupils thrive in a calm, caring environment that supports them well both academically and pastorally.

You have built a team that is constantly striving for excellence. Staff appreciate the training and professional development they receive, and spoke with me about the opportunities they have to develop professionally. All individuals know their contribution to the success of the team is acknowledged and valued. The vast majority of the parents and carers are highly supportive of the school and are full of praise for the commitment shown by you and your staff. One commented, 'This is a beautiful school and my child is well loved and cared for by staff and other pupils.'

The curriculum is broad and rich, providing many opportunities for pupils to learn in different ways. Key stage 2 pupils look forward to the residential visits available to them each year. Pupils told me that they are fun but 'we're still learning'. Parents described the range of extra-curricular opportunities as 'amazing', saying of the staff, 'I don't know how they find the time.'

The previous inspection report asked you to ensure that work is well matched to the pupils' abilities and that there are consistently high expectations of the pupils' handwriting and presentation of their work. We visited a number of lessons together and saw how carefully planned work enables pupils to take the next steps in their learning, and how additional challenge stretches them further. Pupils' books are neatly presented, showing that they take a pride in their work.

You told me you have recently reviewed the way you assess and track pupils' progress. This has led to the introduction of a new system. Although you collect a lot of information and have a good knowledge of what individual pupils know, understand and can do, the system needs further refinement to enable you to make best use of this information when analysing trends and progress of different groups.

Safeguarding is effective.

Pupils' safety and well-being is at the centre of the school's work. You and your staff know the pupils well and are vigilant, dealing with any issues at an early stage so that they do not escalate. Parents say that the school deals with any concerns they have in a sensitive and timely manner.

Pupils enjoy coming to school and say that it is a safe place where poor behaviour and bullying are rare. Pupils have confidence in their teachers to resolve any worries they may have. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe, for example online. They are also aware of the different ways the school keeps them safe, including site security and procedures such as fire drills.

Relationships are strong and pupils are polite and respectful of others, including those from different cultures and with different beliefs. They told me that the school welcomes all newcomers, and reminded me that one of the school's values is 'acceptance'.

You have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that records are detailed and of a good quality. There are clear procedures for raising concerns and these are recorded and followed up thoroughly. Staff receive regular training so they are fully up to date with recent guidance. There are also online training opportunities for staff and governors.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection I followed up specific lines of enquiry. In particular, I looked at the standards in pupils' writing, the teaching of phonics and the way leaders track pupils' progress.
- Standards are consistently above the national average in reading and mathematics. There was a slight dip in key stage 2 writing outcomes in 2017. Pupils throughout the school make good progress from their individual starting points and most achieve at least the standards expected for their age. Current assessments indicate that most pupils are on track to meet their personal targets at the end of the year.

- The broad curriculum enables pupils to extend their knowledge and understanding in a wide range of subjects which are taught in cross-curricular topics. Pupils' learning is further enriched by a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities.
- Teaching is effective and pupils are challenged to deepen their knowledge and understanding by applying what they already know to new situations. Pupils enjoy the challenge and are clear that being a good learner involves them making a contribution to lessons and 'not just learning from the teacher – it's also peer work'. Teachers' skilful questioning encourages pupils to explain their learning and justify their thinking.
- The teaching of phonics is lively and learning proceeds at a brisk pace. There are good levels of engagement, including from the youngest pupils. Pupils in key stage 1 demonstrate good knowledge of letters and sounds in their writing, and spelling is increasingly accurate. Readers are confident and use a range of strategies to read accurately and with good understanding.
- Pupils' books are neatly presented and work is of a standard appropriate to pupils' ages. The most able pupils produce work of a high standard. Pupils write for different purposes and audiences. Work in topic books includes a range of subjects and is of a similar standard to work in literacy books. Mathematics books provide evidence of different activities which develop fluency in calculation, as well as opportunities to develop problem-solving and reasoning skills.
- Teachers regularly assess pupils' work and progress, recording when pupils have achieved specific steps in their learning. This gives teachers a good understanding of individual pupils' achievement. The new tracking system is not yet embedded and it is, therefore, harder to identify trends and set key priorities for improvement for different groups of pupils. As a result, standards are not consistently high in all subjects.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the system to track pupils' progress is embedded so that leaders can make full and effective use of the available assessment information, thereby maximising the progress made by pupils of different abilities in all subjects.

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

Yours sincerely

Jane Salt
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I carried out a learning walk with you, visiting a number of classes. I reviewed pupils' books to consider the standard of work and the progress being made, and we discussed the assessment information held by the school.

I held meetings with you and also met with other members of staff to discuss the school's work. I met with members of the governing body and spoke with a number of parents informally at the beginning of the school day. I talked with groups of pupils at different times of the day and listened to some pupils read.

I reviewed a range of the school's documentation, including some policies and your school improvement plan. I took into account 76 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. There were 48 responses to the pupils' survey and 14 responses to the staff survey.