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Miss Kathryn Jackson
Headteacher
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Dear Miss Jackson

Short inspection of St Mary's Endowed Voluntary Aided Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 25 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 2013.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

Since you were appointed to your post in 2014, the number of pupils attending St Mary's has increased by 35%. You have reorganised the groups in which pupils are taught and there have also been several staffing changes. You have taken on responsibility for leading the provision for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. Throughout this period of change, you and your staff have successfully retained the school's caring ethos. St Mary's has a warm, welcoming atmosphere.

Over the course of the inspection, parents and carers, pupils and staff commented positively on the compassionate, child-centred approach you have developed throughout the school. Comments about the 'patient and caring' staff and, 'approachable and friendly' teachers were typical of the sentiments expressed by many parents. Parents were also very complimentary about the sympathy and discretion with which any concerns or queries they raise are dealt with by staff. Pupils were similarly positive about the level of care and attention they receive from adults at St Mary's. One pupil told me he was happy at school because 'it is amazing'. His friends agreed.

Almost all parents and pupils agreed that pupils' behaviour is good. Many parents commented that their children were settled and happy at school. Pupils' enjoyment is clearly evident in their enthusiasm for their learning and play. They respond well to adults' high expectations of how they should behave. Pupils of all ages mix easily and well at breaktime and lunchtime, playing cheerfully. Pupils confidently told me how your recent work to develop their emotional awareness is helping them in their work and play. The respectful, positive relationships seen throughout the school on the day of inspection provide evidence of the positive impact of this work.

Staff are overwhelmingly supportive of the way the school is led. They welcome your thoughtful, reflective leadership and your clarity of vision. Where your careful monitoring identifies an aspect of provision that is not of the standard you expect, you take action to improve it. For example, as a result of improvements you and your staff have made, the quality of provision in early years has improved. Children make a good start to their education at St Mary's. Pupils also achieve well in the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1.

You have altered how English and mathematics are taught in key stage 1. Consequently, pupils make good progress and in 2017 reached standards in line with their peers nationally in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of key stage 1. However, you recognise that further swift and effective refinements are required to enable pupils to make stronger progress across key stage 2. You rightly are making this a central focus of your work.

Governors share your commitment to school improvement and your dedication in bringing it about. However, in the minutes of a recent governors' meeting, the low pupil attainment by the end of key stage 2 in 2017 was described as an 'unwelcome shock'. Governors know they did not focus sharply enough on the progress pupils were making across key stage 2 in the previous academic year. With the support of the local authority, governors arranged an external review of their work. Governors are already acting upon the advice given, and recognise that they need to quickly improve the effectiveness with which they hold school leaders to account for the progress pupils make, including those who are disadvantaged.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders, including governors, ensure the school fulfils its statutory duty to keep pupils safe. All parents who responded on Parent View agreed their children are safe and well cared for at St Mary's. Inspection evidence supports their views.

Pupils said they felt safe at school because adults are, in the words of one pupil, 'kind and considerate and make me feel safe'. Pupils also explained that if they had concerns, they would be comfortable talking to any adult in school. Pupils also described the strategies they are taught to keep themselves safe in a variety of settings. For example, evidence in pupils' books showed that, from a young age, they develop an understanding of what personal information is and why it is important to exercise caution when sharing these details.

Pupils have a clear understanding of what bullying is and the upset it can cause. They explained that bullying is rare at their school. Pupils told the inspector they were confident that were any incident to occur it would be dealt with well by adults in school.

As a result of regular appropriate training, staff are alert to their responsibilities to keep pupils safe. Adults have a clear understanding of the process they should follow if they have concerns about a pupil's welfare. School records demonstrate that, where it is needed, leaders ensure that pupils in need of additional support receive it in a timely and proportionate way.

Governors make sure the record of checks carried out on adults working at the school is accurately maintained and updated.

Inspection findings

- The first line of enquiry we agreed upon was to establish the progress the small number of children in the early years make from their individual starting points. This was because over the previous three years just over half the children in early years achieved a good level of development.
- Leaders have changed the way they assess and record children's skills and capabilities when they join the Reception class. This accurate information indicates that children enter early years with individual skills and capabilities that are broadly in line with those expected for their age.
- Adults use this information well to plan learning activities that are closely matched to children's interests and needs. Children respond well, working happily and enthusiastically on tasks that help them develop their core skills in English and mathematics as well as those in areas such as physical development and communication. Adults observe children carefully and are quick and skilful in encouraging them to build upon the skills they are developing. As a result, children in early years make good progress from their individual starting points.
- In 2016, by the end of key stage 2, pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics was broadly in line with that of other pupils nationally. In 2017, pupils' progress fell and was low in reading and mathematics. This is why we agreed that my second line of enquiry was to establish whether the progress pupils in key stage 2 make across the curriculum, including in English and mathematics, is good enough from their starting points.
- Through careful review and analysis, you and your staff have a clear understanding of the reasons why pupils did not achieve as well as they should have last year. You have put in place appropriate strategies to bring about necessary improvements in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. However, these strategies need more time to bring about the necessary sustained improvement in pupils' progress.
- Teachers are not consistently effective in enabling pupils to make good progress in developing their skills and understanding. In some cases, pupils spend too long practising skills in English and mathematics they have already mastered. At other

times, teachers do not identify and correct pupils' misconceptions quickly enough and use this information to provide opportunities for pupils to improve and consolidate their skills and understanding. As a consequence, pupils' progress slows and they do not close the gaps in their prior learning in English and mathematics as quickly as they should. This results in fewer pupils achieving the higher standards of which they are capable.

- Leaders have ensured that pupils have access to a broad curriculum which is delivered through a variety of themes such as 'living in the past' and 'food and farming'. However, leaders do not track the progress pupils make across the broader curriculum with the same precision evident in English and mathematics.
- Where teachers implement the school's curriculum effectively and plan learning that enables pupils to apply their numeracy, literacy and analytical skills well, pupils respond enthusiastically and show what they can achieve. However, you correctly judge that teachers' expectations of what pupils can and should achieve in subjects across the curriculum are not always high enough. Teachers do not consistently move pupils on in their learning in a timely way. Inspection evidence demonstrates that pupils' progress across the curriculum varies.
- The third line of enquiry was to determine how well leaders provide for pupils in need of additional support. This was because school assessment information indicated that these pupils' attainment was lower than that of their peers and I wanted to establish if they were making good progress.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are provided for well. Leaders have a detailed knowledge of each pupil's needs and use this knowledge to put in place effective support. Teachers and teaching assistants are appropriately informed about strategies that will help pupils in their learning and support them effectively. Leaders' careful monitoring demonstrates that pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress, sometimes in small but secure steps, socially and academically.
- Leaders are equally thoughtful in their provision for disadvantaged pupils. Funding is used to provide support for pupils in their social, emotional and academic development. This support includes one-to-one support and the input from external agencies. Consequently, pupils are developing greater confidence in their learning, which in turn is leading to better, but not yet consistently good, progress.
- My final line of enquiry was to ascertain how effective leaders had been in improving pupils' attendance. This was because since 2015 rates of absence have increased, and in 2017 were higher than was nationally the case. Similarly, the proportion of pupils who were persistently absent from school was high in 2017.
- Where the school's careful monitoring indicates a pupil's attendance is causing concern, leaders take appropriate action to ensure that it improves. This is leading to an improvement in overall attendance and in that of some pupils in particular. However, a small number of pupils remain absent from school too often.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- governors act swiftly on the recommendations of the recent audit of their work and hold leaders more clearly to account for the progress made by pupils, including those who are disadvantaged
- leaders more closely monitor the progress pupils make in subjects other than English and mathematics
- in English and mathematics, teachers consistently plan and implement programmes of learning that enable pupils to make good progress
- teachers apply consistently high expectations of what pupils can achieve in all subjects across the curriculum and move pupils on in their learning in a timely way
- pupils' attendance continues to improve.

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

Yours sincerely

John Lucas
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I held discussions with you about the key lines of enquiry for this inspection, leaders' evaluation of the quality of education, plans for future improvement and information about current pupils' learning.

I met with other leaders, teachers, teaching assistants and members of support staff, and the chair of the governing body, together with four other governors. I also held a telephone discussion with a representative of the local authority.

Documents such as: the school's improvement plan; leaders' monitoring and analysis of the progress pupils make; records of pupils' attendance; pupil premium reports; and the school's safeguarding arrangements, records, files and documentation were examined.

You and I observed children and pupils learning in every class. We also looked at examples of children's and pupils' work to explore the progress they are making over time.

I spoke with a group of 10 pupils and also with others informally during lessons regarding their learning. I also considered the views of 22 pupils who responded to the online survey.

I considered the views of parents I spoke with at the start of the school day. I also took into account the views of 26 parents who responded on Parent View and of the 18 parents who left comments on the Parent View free-text service.

The views of five staff who completed Ofsted's staff questionnaire were also taken into account.