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Dear Mrs Chell

### **Short inspection of Alverthorpe St Paul's CofE (VA) School 3–11yrs**

Following my visit to the school on 1 March 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.

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 the previous inspection, you have maintained a strong focus on ensuring that pupils feel happy and well cared for. You set high expectations for pupils' behaviour. As a result, the majority of pupils behave well. Pupils are polite and courteous to visitors. You and your leadership team ensure that pupils learn in a positive learning environment. Your commitment to a broad and balanced curriculum means that pupils have a wide range of experiences. Pupils talk positively about the number of opportunities available to them, from residential trips and visits to guidance on future careers. The pupils I talked to during the inspection are proud of their school. Staff are equally committed and dedicated to the pupils and the community they serve. Staff morale is high.

The majority of parents hold positive views about the school. The overwhelming majority of parents, in response to the online Ofsted survey, Parent View, said that they would recommend the school to another parent. One parent said: 'the warm, friendly pastoral approach to Christian education at St Paul's has given my children a solid foundation of community values'. Some of the parents I talked to during the inspection talked warmly about the support for children's emotional needs. Pupils told me that activities, such as the 'worry monster', enable them to reflect on how they feel. Pupils are confident to tell a member of staff if they have any issues or

concern.

Governors, staff and school leaders know the strengths and weakness of the school well. The school improvement plan reflects the areas for improvement. However, leaders, including governors, acknowledge that the improvement plan is not linked closely enough to the gains in pupils' progress you desire. Milestones against which you can judge the impact of your actions are not evident in action plans. This means that the effectiveness of actions is not always evaluated effectively.

Since the previous inspection, the early years leader has worked tirelessly to improve outdoor provision. As a result, the outdoor area now reflects the high-quality provision found indoors. The outdoor area is rich in opportunities for children to develop their language and number skills. As a result of improvements made in early years, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development by the end of Reception has increased year on year and is now above the national average.

A further area for improvement at the last inspection was to ensure that teachers expect and encourage pupils to raise their standards in writing in all subjects. Pupils now have more opportunities to practise their writing skills in subjects beyond English. However, you acknowledge that in some subjects, for example history, teachers do not always provide opportunities for pupils to write at greater length and develop their ideas.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders, including governors, ensure that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You, your staff and governors take your safeguarding responsibilities seriously. You ensure that staff training is up to date. Regular emails and staff briefings ensure that staff are aware of any support needed for individual pupils, or any issues within the local community. You ensure that staff log any concerns, no matter how small. The safeguarding team ensure that early help and support is provided when necessary.

The pupils I talked to during the inspection told me that they feel safe in school. They told me that the use of inappropriate language is not common, but if it does happen teachers do not tolerate this. Pupils say that bullying is rare. If it does happen, pupils told me that it is dealt with quickly. Your school records indicate that this is the case. However, a small number of pupils and parents, in response to the online surveys, said that bullying is not always dealt with effectively.

### **Inspection findings**

- During the inspection I wanted to check the school's approach to reading, particularly for the most able and disadvantaged pupils. Over the last three years pupils' progress in reading, by the end of key stage 2, has declined. In 2017, the progress made by pupils in reading was in the bottom 20% of schools nationally.
- Your deputy headteacher has introduced a range of new reading strategies this

year. This includes encouraging parents to read more regularly with their children at home. Teachers' use of reading and word walls in classrooms is helping pupils to develop their vocabulary and reinforce reading comprehension skills. Pupils talked to me about their enjoyment of reading. Visiting authors help to raise the profile of reading across the school. The pace of improvement has not been rapid enough over time to stem the decline in pupils' progress and attainment in reading. Leaders and governors recognise that there is more work to do to ensure that the progress made by most-able pupils and disadvantaged pupils is accelerated. You acknowledge that the impact of new reading strategies is not analysed regularly enough to judge the impact.

- Governors are committed and dedicated to the school. They are clear about the priorities for improvement. However, governors acknowledge that they need to hold leaders more effectively to account for the impact of actions taken to improve reading across the school.
- In mathematics last year, key stage 1 attainment declined. Your analysis showed that pupils have good calculation skills. Your work to improve pupils' reasoning and problem-solving is showing a positive impact on pupils' current outcomes. In mathematics, pupils have opportunities to correct their work so that they learn from their mistakes. Your focus on developing pupils' mathematics vocabulary is evident in displays around the school. Teachers use these to support pupils' learning. As a result of your actions, more pupils currently in Year 2 are on track to achieve at greater depth in their learning this year than was the case in 2017.
- Some pupils present their work exceptionally well. However, pupils' presentation of their work is variable across the school. You acknowledge that there is more work to do to ensure that teachers reinforce higher expectations for pupils' presentation of work more consistently.
- The proportion of pupils who achieved the required standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check was above the national average for all groups of pupils in 2017. Based on current school information, and inspection findings, this trend looks set to continue. This is because of the strength in phonics teaching and the systematic approach to the teaching of phonics.
- Most pupils attend well. Overall attendance rates are in line with the national average. However, persistent absence, although below the national average, has increased over the last two years. You have rightly identified ensuring that persistent absence does not increase further as a whole-school priority. You acknowledge that you have not checked attendance against previous school trends and national averages as frequently as you could.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- persistent absence does not increase further
- improvement plans identify milestones to judge the impact of actions on pupils' progress
- new strategies to improve reading are regularly evaluated for impact to ensure

that a higher proportion of pupils meet and exceed expected standards, particularly disadvantaged pupils and the most-able pupils

- all teachers are consistent in their expectations of pupils' presentation of their work across year groups and subjects
- increasing opportunities are provided for pupils to write at greater length across a wider range of subjects.

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

Yours sincerely

Michele Costello  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I made visits to all classes with the deputy headteacher. I also looked at the work in pupils' books with the deputy headteacher and key stage 2 mathematics leader. I met with you, your senior leadership team and a number of staff. I met with five governors, including the chair of the governing body. I also met with the local authority school improvement partner.

I took account of the 42 responses from parents to Ofsted's survey, Parent View, and the 30 free-text comments. I also considered the 15 responses to the Ofsted's staff survey and the 47 responses to the Ofsted's pupil survey. I met with a group of staff. I talked informally to pupils during lunchtime and in lessons. I met formally with a group of pupils from Years 4, 5 and 6. I spoke to a number of parents as they dropped their children off at the start of the school day. I listened to some pupils from Years 4 and 6 read and discussed their reading with them.

I examined a range of documents, including the school improvement plan, the school's self-evaluation, assessment information, governors' minutes, local authority visit reports, attendance and behaviour logs, and safeguarding records.