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Mr Jon Bird
Headteacher
St Mary's Church of England Primary School, Yate
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Dear Mr Bird

Short inspection of St Mary's Church of England Primary School, Yate

Following my visit to the school on 20 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 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.

You have provided strong leadership for the school since your appointment in January 2015. You lead with integrity and humility. You have developed teachers' skills well and given them leadership responsibilities which have brought out the best in them. Following your example, staff think carefully about their work and continually look for ways in which they can improve it. You have actively developed links with the local authority and with other schools in the local area. This has resulted in your staff sharing their expertise and gaining from the experience of others.

Pupils achieve well at this school. Children in the early years thrive. A high proportion of children achieve a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year. Pupils make good progress throughout the school. Many pupils who join the school during key stage 2 have low prior attainment. By the end of Year 6, the proportion of pupils who attain the standard expected of them in reading, writing and mathematics is higher than seen nationally. You have high expectations of pupils and staff. You have successfully developed pupils' understanding of the school's values, and these highly positive values now shine through in the work of the school.

Pupils' attendance is good, they enjoy coming to school. Teachers and teaching assistants develop good relationships with pupils. Pupils particularly enjoy the

'family days' where they work together on creative projects across the age ranges.

At the previous inspection the school was asked to improve the quality of teaching, particularly of writing. By asking teachers to reflect on their work, and then successfully developing their skills, you have achieved this. Pupils' progress in writing, compared to that of other pupils nationally, was above average last year. Your staff encourage pupils' creativity and imagination well in their writing. However, for some pupils, spelling is still a weakness.

Key stage 2 pupils' progress in reading did not improve as much as their progress in writing and mathematics last year. By changing the teaching of reading, you have caused pupils', particularly boys', reading ability to improve across the school this year. While their skills have improved, pupils are not yet reading as widely as they could. Disadvantaged pupils' progress is in line with the average for other pupils nationally. However, you recognised two years ago that some pupils within this group did not achieve as well as they should. You are ambitious for these pupils and so you have successfully taken steps to improve their progress.

The proportion of key stage 1 pupils whose attainment in mathematics is at the level expected of them has been consistently above the national average in the recent past. You are developing mathematics teaching so that a higher proportion of the most able pupils attain a greater depth of understanding. You have been largely successful, but some pupils still find it difficult to explain their reasoning when solving problems.

Safeguarding is effective.

The school's arrangements for keeping pupils safe are effective. Rigorous vetting procedures make sure that all staff are suitable to work with children. You keep detailed and accurate records of any concerns that staff have about pupils' welfare and the action that is subsequently taken. You follow up tenaciously if you are not satisfied with the response of other agencies when they are notified.

Pupils and parents say the school is a safe place where staff are skilled and caring. Pupils receive and understand appropriate guidance on potential risks. For example, pupils know how to stay safe when riding their bicycles to school, and have a good awareness of the need for care when using the internet. The overwhelming majority of parents who responded to the Parent View survey believe that their children are happy and well looked after at school.

You ensure that all staff and governors are trained in safeguarding practices to an appropriate level. Through regular communications, you keep staff up to date and maintain their awareness of the need for vigilance. Consequently, you have established a strong and open culture of safeguarding.

Inspection findings

- Senior leaders have improved teachers' assessment of pupils' attainment and progress. Senior leaders have a detailed, accurate self-evaluation of the performance of the school. Several new governors have joined the governing body since the previous inspection. The chair of the governing body has taken steps to improve its organisation and effectiveness. It now provides rigorous challenge and support to senior leaders.
- To decide if the school remained good, a first line of enquiry evaluated the support provided for disadvantaged pupils. Governors set out their ambition to raise disadvantaged pupils' progress above the national average for other pupils, by giving a senior leader this specific remit two years ago. She has raised teachers' awareness of the needs of individual disadvantaged pupils and ensured that teachers' planning takes these needs into account. Senior leaders have successfully raised the rate of disadvantaged pupils' attendance up to and above that of other pupils. As a result of these improvements, the great majority of disadvantaged pupils make strong progress.
- A second line of enquiry considered the teaching of reading. Pupils' progress in reading last year was in line with that of other pupils nationally from similar starting points. Senior leaders asked teachers to consider modifying their approach to teaching reading. Teachers and teaching assistants successfully introduced new methods. The school's assessment information shows that pupils' progress in reading has improved this year. Teachers ensure that pupils, particularly boys, are presented with positive role models who encourage them to read. This is causing boys to read more often. However, some do not read enough different types of books.
- Another line of enquiry centred on pupils' attainment in spelling, punctuation and grammar. In 2017, key stage 2 pupils' attainment in the assessment of their spelling, punctuation and grammar was a little below the average nationally. Pupils' spelling was the weakest element. Your teachers are now explicit about the patterns and rules pupils need to learn. Pupils say that teachers are imaginative in the examples they use when teaching spelling, and this helps fire their interest. While the majority of pupils' accuracy in spelling has improved, it is still a weakness in too many pupils' writing.
- A final line of enquiry looked at key stage 1 pupils' understanding of mathematics. A high proportion of Year 2 pupils consistently attain the standard in mathematics that is expected of them. However, the proportion of pupils who attain at a greater depth has been lower than it should be in recent years. Teachers have improved their skills in teaching mathematics through training as part of a local professional development group and through national training initiatives. Consequently, mathematics teaching now offers pupils more challenge. Teachers regularly ask pupils to solve problems and explain their reasoning. This is leading most pupils to deepen their mathematical understanding, although some pupils find it difficult to make these explanations.
- Parents are appreciative of the skill and dedication of the staff at every level. One parent's comment was typical of many: 'This school works so hard with parents and pupils to develop the best in every child. It has given our daughter a fantastic basis for her education and personal development.' Almost without

exception, the parents who contacted Ofsted through Parent View said that they would recommend this school to others.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils select books to read from a wide range of authors and genres
- pupils' accuracy in spelling improves further
- teachers help key stage 1 pupils to become more confident at explaining their mathematical reasoning.

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

Yours sincerely

Paul Williams
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held formal meetings with you, your deputy headteacher and with two governors. I met with middle leaders. I spoke with many pupils informally at playtime and I held a meeting with key stage 2 pupils from the school council. I looked at examples of pupils' work, made observations of learning across the school, and spoke with pupils during lessons. I scrutinised a variety of documents, including the school's own evaluation of its performance, assessment information, records of the checks that leaders make on the suitability of staff to work with children and other information relating to safeguarding. I took account of 104 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire Parent View and spoke to several parents at the start of the school day.