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Mr Peter Davies  
St Barnabas CofE Primary School  
St Barnabas Road  
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Leicestershire  
LE5 4BD

Dear Mr Davies

### **Short inspection of St Barnabas CofE Primary School**

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 March 2013.

#### **The school continues to be good**

The leadership team has maintained a good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You provide clear, effective leadership and you ensure that the school is an orderly, attractive and stimulating learning environment. You have worked with determination and commitment to make sure that the school has continued to move forward since the last inspection. For example, you have set about raising aspirations, improving the systems in place for monitoring the progress of pupils and ensuring that greater support is given to those pupils at risk of falling behind in their studies.

Staff work well together. Their responses to the inspection questionnaire show that they understand the vision for the school. This is a school that has strong and clearly set out values, which everyone shares and promotes. You make sure that staff, pupils and families feel welcome and are treated with courtesy and respect. The overwhelming majority of pupils, parents and carers feel pleased and proud to be part of the school community. Children enter the school from a range of diverse backgrounds, reflecting the local community. They have skills and understanding below what is typical for their age. Most children make a good start in the early years, quickly settle and build good relationships. You agree with me, however, that children with low prior achievement do not acquire language skills quickly enough, which initially slows their progress in reading and writing.

You monitor provision carefully and have a good understanding of the next steps that are needed for the school to improve further. You know that teaching is particularly strong in key stage 2. Together, we saw that teachers have high expectations in these classes. As a consequence, the progress pupils make in

writing is good, for example. We agreed that it would be helpful to share some of this good practice more widely, especially with teachers in key stage 1.

Your pupils flourish both socially and academically and are a credit to the school. Pupils are friendly, confident and articulate. They behave extremely sensibly throughout the school day, including when attending the well-organised breakfast club.

Pupils are keen to learn and thoroughly enjoy school. They are especially positive about the successful reading challenges and the opportunities to take extra responsibility, such as being a prefect. You were disappointed with the key stage 2 results in reading in 2017. Your response has been effective. A detailed look at pupils' books showed that a large majority are now working at age-related expectations or above. You have identified teaching that needs to improve further and you have made quick changes to teaching groups and put appropriate support in place to secure the necessary improvements. Most teaching is now characterised by high expectations, good questioning, good subject knowledge and a positive classroom environment. We agreed that the impact of teaching on pupils' learning can be further improved through teachers paying closer attention to pupil's prior achievement when planning new work.

You are preparing pupils well for the next stage of their education, and for later life. The levels of confidence seen by the time pupils reach Year 6 show how successfully the school nurtures the whole child. You and your staff model and teach key values such as tolerance, respect and kindness.

Parents are very positive about the school, especially about the quality of care given to their children and the good start to life in the early years. Parents typically told me that they 'could not fault the school' and were appreciative of the quick response to any concerns.

### **Safeguarding is effective**

Leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Records of staff's suitability to work with children are clear and well organised. There are well-understood systems in place for staff to report concerns. The designated safeguarding leaders act quickly and resolutely to follow up referrals made to other agencies.

The pupils I spoke to in groups and informally around the school told me that they feel safe and happy at school. Parents' views were also very positive. The vast majority agreed that pupils are safe and well cared for at school, with many choosing to express how secure their children feel.

## Inspection findings

- To ascertain that the school remains good, one of my lines of enquiry was about pupils' achievements in reading. Pupils' attainment in reading has, historically, been slightly lower than in writing and mathematics across the school. You had identified that in reading pupils did not have the stamina to read at length or were unable to read at pace. In addition, the quality of vocabulary used by pupils required improvement. Pupils did not have enough opportunities to work independently or to read for pleasure or for sustained periods of time. You set about improving these aspects of pupil performance in reading and in the teaching of reading. As a consequence, progress in reading is now good and the standard of pupils' work is broadly in line with age-related expectations. This is the result of the actions taken by leadership and of improvements to the quality of teaching, as well as a highly effective range of catch-up strategies and support programmes, such as the 'reading racetrack'.
- My second line of enquiry was about pupils' achievements in writing. Pupils' progress in writing has been significantly above the national average for three years. I found that pupils are enthusiastic writers and progress from very low starting points in the early years. Visits across lessons quickly confirmed the differences that improvements to teaching have made, particularly in key stage 2. In English, pupils write with imagination, and also show great purpose and control, especially over the structure of sentences, punctuation and the use of tenses, and as a result make good progress. For example, their recent writing, completing book reviews about favourite authors, is well structured and engaging to its audience.
- You agreed with me that greater progress in writing could be made by pupils in key stage 1. You have already re-organised teaching groups and teachers to strengthen teaching in Years 1 and 2. The pupils' work shows that progress is already improving. However, teachers are not using prior assessment information well enough in order to plan work effectively enough for pupils. Opportunities are missed to practise writing in subjects other than English and mathematics.
- My third line of enquiry was about how leaders are ensuring that the disadvantaged pupils make at least the same level of progress and attain similar standards as other pupils nationally across the curriculum. In 2016 and 2017, key stage 2 results showed that a small number of disadvantaged pupils did not achieve as well as non-disadvantaged pupils. Leaders are working hard to accelerate the progress made by disadvantaged pupils currently at the school, and a good range of social, emotional and academic support is in place. Disadvantaged pupils have benefited from the higher profile of reading in the school, and improved resources.
- You and your leadership team continually monitor the progress and achievements of disadvantaged pupils. You ensure that each pupil receives tailored provision to meet their needs. You ensure that this provision is reviewed frequently and adapted, depending on the pupil's level of progress. Current progress data across the curriculum shows that the progress these pupils are making is improving as a

result, especially in key stage 2.

- My fourth line of enquiry focused on achievements in early years to establish the sustainability of improvements. Children's starting points are typically low. They quickly become confident in their relationships with one another. Adults play an effective role in supporting children's progress. They encourage the use of language by modelling key words for children to repeat. The proportion of children who reach a good level of development is improving but is still below the national average. You agree with me that children with low prior achievement do not acquire language skills quickly enough, and that the learning opportunities are not effective enough, especially outdoors, to allow the children to progress as quickly as they could.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils make consistently good progress in writing across key stage 1, with opportunities to develop their extended writing skills in other subjects across the curriculum, as well as English
- teachers pay close attention to pupils' prior learning and achievement when planning new work
- children's language acquisition is accelerated on joining the reception class, and they are offered a well-resourced, rich and highly effective outdoor learning environment which accelerates learning.

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

Yours sincerely

Philip Garnham  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

- During the course of this inspection, I held meetings with you, other senior and middle leaders, the chair of governors and the school effectiveness adviser from the local authority.
- I spoke with pupils informally in classrooms and when walking around the school site. I also met formally with eight Year 6 pupils.
- I visited a range of classes across early years, key stage 1 and key stage 2.
- I undertook a scrutiny of pupils' work in their books and folders.
- Policies and procedures for the safeguarding of pupils were examined, along with

the school records of checks carried out on staff working at the school.

- A range of documents were analysed or discussed, including: the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans; documents relating to pupils' achievement; attendance and behaviour; minutes of governor meetings and curriculum plans.
- I considered the views of 84 parents who responded to the Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as the views of five parents expressed via the free-text service.