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Mrs C Watkin
Headteacher
St James Church of England Primary School, Daisy Hill
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Dear Mrs Watkin

Short inspection of St James CofE Primary School, Daisy Hill

Following my visit to the school on 15 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 November 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 your appointment in 2015, you have worked effectively with a hard-working and dedicated senior leadership team. You ensure that staff receive support and training to further develop their skills. For example, following training for staff on phonics, the number of pupils who achieved the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check increased each year, and performance is now well above that seen nationally. Additionally, all disadvantaged pupils in Year 1 achieved the standard in 2017.

Your governors are well informed about pupils' progress and work with leaders to support the development of the school. For example, one governor visits school regularly to support pupils in key stage 2 with their mathematical and reading skills. You work effectively with the governing body to ensure that links with the local church remain strong. One governor proudly noted that 'going to church is part of the whole-school experience'. On such occasions, pupils take a central role in religious services.

Pupils are proud of their school. They particularly value the many opportunities to contribute to school life as e-safety champions, eco-committee members, anti-

bullying ambassadors, and representatives of a pupil parliament. Such opportunities allow the pupils to feel deeply involved in the development of the school.

In the previous inspection, inspectors noted that teachers should develop further the teaching of mathematics. This has been addressed well. Teachers have undertaken training and now ensure that pupils have regular opportunities to carry out problem-solving and other activities to develop their reasoning skills. As a result, the school's most recent published performance information shows that the progress pupils make by the end of key stage 2 is average and their attainment is higher than that seen nationally at both the expected and the higher levels.

The inspectors also identified that there was a need to increase teachers' expectations so that the levels of challenge, particularly for the most able pupils, would improve. While improvements have been made in this area, the focus on challenging the most able pupils remains part of your school development planning. This is because the school's most recent published performance information shows that the attainment of this group at the higher levels in reading and writing is below that seen nationally. Finally, the inspectors noted that teachers should have increased opportunities to observe best practice in other schools. Teachers now share good practice both within and beyond their school. This has provided them with the confidence and knowledge to make improvements to the quality of learning.

We discussed areas where further work is required to bring about school improvement. Although much work has been undertaken to provide additional support for pupils in key stage 2, we agreed that teachers need to consistently challenge pupils, including the most able and those who are disadvantaged, to ensure that their progress and attainment accelerate in writing and reading. We also agreed that the range of safeguarding training provided for governors requires further development. This is to ensure that they are fully able to challenge leaders on issues relating to health and safety. Finally, while improvements have been made to the attendance of most pupils, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils requires further support to bring it in line with the attendance of other groups.

Safeguarding is effective.

You work closely with senior leaders to ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are effective. Your school site is safe and secure. Visitors are carefully checked on entry to ensure that they pose no risk to pupils. Safeguarding concerns are recorded thoroughly and you respond promptly, following up concerns with a range of outside agencies where this is required.

You ensure that staff undertake a broad range of safeguarding training so that they understand their role in keeping pupils safe. Pupils have a clear understanding of how to stay safe both online and in the real world. Your pupil e-safety champions have undertaken training on e-safety and were proud to present this information to other pupils during an assembly.

Inspection findings

- At the start of this inspection, I shared with you a number of lines of enquiry. The first looked at the ways in which leaders are addressing the low levels of progress in writing for pupils in key stage 2. Leaders are ensuring that there is an increased focus on spelling and grammar. Teachers receive additional training and writing is now taught via high-quality reading texts. Any pupils falling behind receive focused support. You identify that the performance of boys has been lower than that of girls. As a consequence, writing activities have been altered to ensure that they are of equal interest to boys. For example, a dinosaur workshop greatly excited and engaged all pupils, resulting in high-quality writing. While much has been done to develop learning in this area, further time is required to ensure that the progress of pupils throughout key stage 2 improves consistently towards levels seen nationally by the end of Year 6.
- The next area examined was the decline in progress of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, in reading. This was highlighted in the published information on performance at the end of key stage 2 in 2017. Leaders are developing the way in which reading is taught. Teachers now use high-quality literature as a source from which to teach across the curriculum. Reading skills are taught to all year groups in a structured manner and teachers ensure that there is clear progression from one year to the next. Pupils are encouraged to read widely and often from a range of high-quality texts which are displayed around school as well as in the library. Pupils enjoy visits from authors and from a local librarian. Teachers have received training on improving pupils' reading for understanding. However, leaders agree that there is still further work to be done to ensure that the progress of all pupils in key stage 2 improves and the most able pupils receive the depth of questioning required in lessons to move their learning forward.
- Leaders are aware that the progress and attainment of disadvantaged pupils is below that seen nationally in key stage 1 in writing and mathematics and in key stage 2 in reading and writing. Much work has been undertaken to address this issue. The school commissioned a review of leaders' effectiveness in spending the pupil premium funding. Leaders have been effective in putting suggested actions into place. They ensure that the progress of disadvantaged pupils is closely tracked and analysed via regular monitoring reports. As a result, additional support is provided for them which is having a positive impact on their progress. However, further work is required to ensure that the attainment of disadvantaged pupils increases in both key stages 1 and 2 to reflect performance seen nationally.
- You work effectively with other leaders and staff to improve pupils' attendance. Leaders communicate closely with parents and carers and ensure that a broad range of support is offered to them to ensure that their children attend school regularly and on time. Pupils told me during the inspection that they greatly enjoy assemblies where good attendance is celebrated. Classes are keen to adopt SAM ('School Attendance Matters') – the attendance polar bear – for the week, in recognition of their class's high attendance. Pupils are also proud of their badges

which are awarded for good attendance. The pupils I spoke with during the inspection understood the importance of good attendance. One pupil, reflecting the views of others, noted on good attendance: 'It is the key to a successful life.' As a consequence, the attendance of almost all pupils is now broadly in line with rates seen nationally. However, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils requires additional attention to ensure that it improves consistently over time.

- My final line of enquiry concerned the progress of children in their Reception Year. In 2017, the proportion of children who achieved a good level of development declined to below that seen nationally. This decline was addressed immediately. Leaders identified that children required additional support with motor skills and language development. Additional support is now in place to ensure that children's skills in these areas are developed further. Leaders also increased opportunities for parents to contribute to their children's learning. For example, parents were invited to attend workshops and 'stay and play' sessions to develop their ability to support their children at home. As a consequence, the school's most recent performance information indicates that an increased number of children are currently at a standard appropriate for their age in the Reception Year.
- Since the previous inspection, you have introduced Nursery provision to the school. This helps to provide a good start for children. Your early years leader works effectively with other staff to create an exciting and stimulating environment which actively supports learning. Leaders ensure that the children benefit from a wide range of high-quality resources and are encouraged to make effective connections in their learning. For example, during the inspection, children were able to explain the conditions needed to grow beans effectively and could connect this learning to a story that they were reading.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers challenge all pupils in key stage 2, including the most able and those who are disadvantaged, with work that accelerates their progress in writing and reading
- the progress, attainment and attendance of disadvantaged pupils in key stage 1 and 2 increases consistently over time to reflect levels seen nationally.

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

Yours sincerely

Gill Pritchard
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you and the deputy headteacher. I also met with six governors, including the chair and the vice chair of the governing body. I met with leaders for English, mathematics and early years to discuss their areas of responsibility. I also spoke with a local authority improvement partner. I had a formal discussion with a group of pupils, and I met with your school administrator. Finally, I met with a parent at their request.

Accompanied by you, I visited your Nursery provision and classes from Year 1 to Year 6. I observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and as they moved around the school. I scrutinised examples of pupils' work and reviewed documents, including your record of checks on the suitability of staff and volunteers to work with children. I also examined the school's self-evaluation, improvement plan, attendance and assessment information. I took account of the 118 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and 18 responses to the staff survey. I also considered information posted on the school's website.