

21 May 2018

Mr Mark Speakman
Headteacher
St John's CofE Primary School
Church Street
Pemberton
Wigan
Lancashire
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Dear Mr Speakman

Short inspection of St John's CofE Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 1 May 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 May 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. In September 2017 there were changes in staffing, with several teachers relatively new to the profession joining the team. You have galvanised the new team to ensure that standards have been maintained. Staff are very supportive of you and your leadership team. They understand what you expect from them and they are fully committed to the school's mission and high expectations to do their best for the children you serve. You have a strong senior team and you are working hard to ensure that your new leaders have the skills and confidence to lead on the areas for which they are responsible. Ensuring that you develop leadership beyond the senior team is a priority for further improvement. You have committed to ensuring further training for middle leaders to ensure that they consistently have an impact on their areas of responsibility.

You have established an aspirational culture for all pupils. With your team, you ensure that the school is a very kind, caring place for the pupils to develop in all aspects of their life. Pupils, parents, staff and governors are proud to be part of the St John's community. Pupils are very appreciative of what their teachers do for them and respond accordingly. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They are polite and courteous to visitors and staff. Around the school and on the playground, pupils show great respect and care for each other. In the classroom they respond well to their teachers. They try their best and support each other in their learning.

Governors work very well with school leaders. You provide them with appropriate

information to ensure that they are well informed about the progress of the school in all aspects. They are very skilled in interpreting data with respect to the progress of pupils and use this information to challenge you and your leadership team.

At the time of the last inspection, there was one recommendation to improve teaching by making sure that work set is always hard enough so that the most able pupils are consistently challenged to make the best possible progress. You have addressed this by appointing a coordinator responsible for the progress of the most able pupils. Teachers effectively use personal profiles which identify the strengths of every able pupil to plan tasks that provide suitable challenge. We observed the most able Year 3 pupils benefiting from significant challenge by their teacher to develop high-quality language in writing a shape poem.

During the inspection we saw pupils enjoying their learning. The most able pupils are confident to tackle the challenges presented to them. As one pupil commented, 'We don't worry if we are stuck and we work with our friends to check if we have got things right.' Most-able pupils are very confident in the skills of re-editing their writing to improve it. In mathematics, pupils' ability to master important concepts and skills is particularly evident in books in key stage 2. Most-able pupils apply their skills well and are developing their skills in reasoning and language to explain their thinking. The work in pupils' books and assessments carried out by your team show that more pupils are now working at a higher standard.

Safeguarding is effective.

School leaders and governors have successfully created a culture where keeping children safe is the highest priority. All safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. Staff are well trained and know what to do if they have any concerns about a child or colleague. Referrals are made to the relevant outside agencies when any concerns arise.

In their responses to Ofsted's online survey, parents, staff and pupils agreed that pupils feel very safe at school. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, and they know how to protect themselves when online. Pupils show a good awareness of the different forms that bullying might take. They know what to do if they experience bullying, and all feel confident to report it to a member of staff. Pupils could name at least one adult in the school to whom they could talk if they felt worried.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection I met with you to agree the key lines of enquiry for the inspection. The first of these was the quality of provision for and the progress of children in early years. This is because the proportion of children achieving the expected good level of development at the end of the Reception Year was below average in both 2016 and 2017. A change of leadership since the start of this academic year is now bringing about tangible improvements which are supporting the progress of the children.
- The new leader of early years is committed to ensuring that the children achieve the best possible outcomes by the time they enter Year 1. Detailed assessments

of the children when they enter school show that they start with skills and abilities below those that are typical for their age. The early years staff use this information to plan activities within both the indoor and the outdoor learning spaces that effectively match the needs of the children.

- The classroom is a very happy place. There is a calm, purposeful environment in the early years. Good relationships help children to develop positive attitudes to their learning, preparing them well for future progress through the school. Children behave well, work and play together happily, and develop good social skills. They understand how to take turns and play safely.
- The leader has prioritised the development of communication and language. During the inspection, children were highly engaged in a range of focused activities. They developed their communication and language skills. One group was totally engaged in a role play about 'attending a ball'. Children in the outdoor developed language well as they talked about making fish fingers in the mud kitchen.
- School assessment information and evidence seen in children's learning journeys indicate that, this year, the proportion of children working at a good level of development shows improvement on outcomes achieved in 2017. Your school development plan includes relevant actions to ensure that these recent improvements are sustained and built upon.
- The second area we agreed to focus on was what leaders have done to improve pupils' outcomes in writing and mathematics at key stage 1. You and your leadership team have improved the quality of teaching in key stage 1. Teaching is now accurately matched to pupils' needs. Teachers set high expectations for pupils. This was evident in Year 1, where pupils developed their understanding of writing in accurate sentences using the story of Little Red Riding Hood as a stimulus. The teacher was very skilled in her questioning to challenge pupils and really made them think. You have asked your staff to give the pupils more responsibility for their own learning. Pupils in Year 2 benefited from working with their friends to evaluate each other's work in mathematics work on subtraction. They showed a good understanding of the importance of this activity. Pupils are now making good progress in mathematics at key stage 1.
- Standards are on the rise. Work in books now closely matches the standards expected for key stage 1. Monitoring, including lesson observations and checking of books, supports the improvement. However, a priority for improvement is to ensure that more pupils make accelerated progress to achieve or exceed the expected standard by the end of Year 2, particularly in their writing. Some of the pupils have gaps in their skills, knowledge and understanding, especially in communication and language.
- The final line of enquiry was to consider the quality of the work pupils do in the wider curriculum. You and your team are committed to ensuring that pupils' experience of school provides them with an education that supports their academic, social and emotional development. The link with Smiling Valley Farm School in Africa helps the pupils understand another culture different to their own. When we looked at books, there was strong evidence of pupils engaging in regular work in science, history and geography. However, the opportunities to

write in detail in these subjects were limited, and this needs to improve to prepare pupils for the next stages of their education.

- When I spoke to the children they were unanimous in their view that they enjoyed the curriculum. They were appreciative of the many educational visits and visitors. They spoke enthusiastically about additional activities, including canoeing and archery. As part of our visit to classrooms, I should say it was a great privilege to see music lessons in which pupils demonstrated a high level of expertise in understanding music and playing a range of instruments. Pupils were very proud to represent their school as part of the Music Theatre Club in many local performances.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- more pupils make accelerated progress to achieve or exceed the expected standard by the end of Year 2, particularly in their writing
- they provide more opportunities for pupils to write in detail in subjects other than English
- leadership is developed beyond the senior team.

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

Yours sincerely

Andrew Morley
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you, your senior leaders, the school's improvement partner, governors, staff and pupils. We visited lessons jointly to observe pupils' learning. We looked at pupils' workbooks and considered documentary evidence relating to the impact of the school's work, including safeguarding, attendance, the use of additional funding, the school's development plan, reports to governors and other school documents. I took into account 39 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, and spoke to parents at the beginning of the school day. There were no responses to the pupil survey. However, I spoke to many pupils from across the school during the day in classrooms, at lunchtime and during breaktimes. I took into account 24 responses to the staff survey.