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Mrs Jane Lindsay  
Headteacher  
St Laurence Church Junior School  
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West Midlands  
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Dear Mrs Lindsay

### **Short inspection of St Laurence Church Junior School**

Following my visit to the school on 23 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 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, governors and leaders have strengthened the school. This has been achieved particularly through building on the quality of teaching and further developing a broad and balanced curriculum. The values of trust, forgiveness and endurance spread throughout the school and reflect the strong Christian ethos. Pupils enjoy coming to school and they work hard.

You are ambitious for the success of all pupils and have high expectations of yourself and your staff. You and other leaders ensure that improvement plans focus on pupils' achievement. As a result, an increasing proportion of pupils are academically ready for the next stage in their education. You recognise that in the past, pupils did not make acceptable rates of progress in writing. The teaching of writing is now strong because teachers have excellent subject knowledge, which they impart well to pupils. There are purposeful opportunities for pupils to write at length in a range of subjects across the curriculum.

Leaders and teachers make sure they know pupils' starting points very well. Interventions that focus on improving the basic skills of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are effective in supporting this group of pupils and help most of them to make progress in line with their peers. Occasionally, some of the intervention tasks are too easy and as a result, some pupils do not make as much progress as they could.

Pupils are enthusiastic about their learning and speak positively about the experiences they have. Year 3 pupils were full of awe and wonder at meeting live snakes and spiders as part of their rainforest project. Teachers plan topics that interest pupils and build in practical activities where appropriate. For example, pupils in Year 4 are highly engaged in their topic on chocolate. Older pupils explain how residential visits to outdoor learning centres and the city of York help them to become more confident as well as develop new skills. Most pupils behave well because everyone understands the school rules. When pupils behave well they earn house points and certificates. Pupils say that teachers are fair. Pupils are proud to be included in the 'Star Pupil' display in the main hall.

Governors have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and its areas for improvement. The chair of governors ensures that all members of staff have up-to-date training so that they are completely clear about their roles and responsibilities. They make regular visits to the school in order to check out for themselves the accuracy of what leaders have told them. In turn, governors provide effective support and challenge.

Many parents and carers are positive about the work you do with their children, in particular how well staff support and encourage pupils. One parent commented that teachers 'go above and beyond expectation'. However, a significant minority of parents expressed concerns that the school does not listen well enough to their views. A similar proportion of parents have concerns about transition from the infant school. You acknowledge that this can be a difficult time for pupils because of different expectations in a new school. Leaders and governors are aware of the need to take further steps to engage parents, particularly of new pupils, more in their children's education.

You have successfully addressed the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection report. Senior leaders have ensured that an important part of the professional development of teachers is to learn from each other. Pupils are engaged in their learning because they are interested in the topics and teachers plan activities to build on what pupils already know. Teachers' explanations are clear and, as a result, pupils know exactly what they have to do to be successful. Leaders were also asked to improve pupils' achievement in writing. Most pupils now make strong progress in writing. However, leaders are aware that some of the most able pupils are not reaching the higher standards of which they are capable.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You and your leadership team have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Staff training is up to date and all staff understand their child protection responsibilities, including how to report any concerns they have. Child protection records are stored securely and are well organised.

Governors take their responsibilities very seriously and every member receives safeguarding training. They make additional checks on the school's safeguarding procedures and are committed to the safety of all pupils.

All staff who responded to the online questionnaire, and most parents, agree that children are safe in school. The school seeks to provide additional support for families, when appropriate, to ensure the well-being of pupils. During the inspection, parents were full of praise for the staff who had helped them and their children in specific, difficult circumstances.

Pupils say that they feel safe in school and can explain why. They are knowledgeable about using the internet safely and about road safety. Pupils are aware of how to get help if they need it. Pupils have a clear understanding of what bullying is. They say that there is no bullying in the school but that if there was, they would tell an adult. They have a high expectation that any adult in school would be able to help them and stop it from happening.

### **Inspection findings**

- At the start of the inspection, we agreed that the first line of enquiry would be to find out what impact leaders have had in improving rates of progress in writing. This is because progress in writing at the end of key stage 2 was below the national average in 2016 and 2017. You have ensured that all teachers know the starting points of all of the pupils in their class. Progress is tracked carefully and teachers plan lessons that build successfully on pupils' learning over time.
- Pupils enjoy writing and they are knowledgeable about how to use grammar, punctuation and spelling effectively. They take care with the presentation of their work. Pupils focus on making their writing interesting for the reader and choose vocabulary carefully. Teachers ensure that pupils understand the features of different types of writing. Leaders have organised the curriculum so that pupils have many opportunities to write in a range of different subjects. Teachers have equally high expectations of the quality of writing that pupils will produce in history, geography and science as they do in English. As a result, pupils now make strong progress in writing. Leaders are aware that not enough pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, reach the higher standard at the end of key stage 2.
- My second key line of enquiry was to find out about the steps taken by leaders to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. This is because over the last two years, this group of pupils has not achieved as well as other pupils at the end of key stage 2 in reading, writing or mathematics. Pupils are now making stronger progress in a range of subjects because leaders use pupil premium funding effectively to meet their needs. Pupils who I heard read did so confidently and with enthusiasm. They told me about the wide range of books that are available in the school library. They could all tell me about a favourite author and added that teachers encourage them to read a wide range of genres.
- An increasing proportion of disadvantaged pupils are now working at the expected standard for their age in reading, writing and mathematics in most year groups. This is evident in their books across a variety of subjects. Similarly, an increasing proportion of pupils are working at the higher standard. This is important because no disadvantaged pupils achieved the higher standard in

writing in 2016 and 2017 at the end of key stage 2.

- My third key line of enquiry was to explore whether the support for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities enables them make as much progress in reading as their peers. This is because over the last two years, this group of pupils have made significantly less progress than others by the end of key stage 2. The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) ensures that leaders and teachers identify pupils' additional needs quickly. Staff deliver extra reading interventions to reduce specific barriers to learning. This includes improving pupils' knowledge and understanding of phonics, improving sight vocabulary and developing comprehension skills. School assessment information shows that progress is improving for this group of pupils but leaders acknowledge that some pupils are capable of making more rapid progress.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- a greater proportion of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those who are the most able, achieve the highest standard in writing at the end of key stage 2
- additional support provided for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities helps them to make more rapid progress in reading
- there are more opportunities for parents to be involved with their children's education so that there is a shared understanding of the school's expectations.

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

Yours sincerely

Jo Evans  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with you, senior and middle leaders, parents, governors and an education consultant who provides support to the school. Together we visited classrooms and looked at pupils' work. I also met with a group of 12 pupils to explore their views on the school.

I reviewed the school's website and a range of documents including: the single central record; child protection documents; the school's self-evaluation; improvement plans; monitoring information; and pupil progress and assessment information.

I took account of the 62 parents' responses to Parent View, including 45 free-text

comments and 30 responses from staff to Ofsted's questionnaire. There were no responses to the pupil questionnaire.