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Mrs Amanda Skidmore  
Headteacher  
St Mary's CofE Primary School  
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Dear Mrs Skidmore

### **Short inspection of St Mary's CofE Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 22 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 February 2014.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

There have been a number of positive changes in leadership since the last inspection. You have established a system of shared leadership through the development of a middle leadership team with subject responsibilities. Leaders share your high expectations and ambition to ensure that pupils thrive in all areas of school life. Leaders evaluate the school strengths and weaknesses accurately. This evaluation is used to create a detailed and precise improvement plan. Determined leadership and well-organised monitoring systems have led to improvements in the quality of teaching and in particular to pupils' outcomes in reading and writing. However, there is still work to be done to ensure that pupils' attainment in mathematics is as high as that seen in reading and writing by the end of key stage 2. Although phonics teaching and learning has improved in key stage 1, there is still further work to do in order to improve outcomes for pupils.

You place a strong emphasis on ensuring that pupils show positive attitudes to learning and are considerate towards each other. The school's motto, 'Trust in the Lord and flourish', permeates throughout the school. As a result, pupils are well behaved, courteous and kind. The vast majority of parents and carers who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, indicated that they would recommend the school. Comments that school staff are 'very caring' and 'supportive' were typical of the views of many parents.

Governors know the school well and work closely with leaders to make improvements. They know the school's strengths and areas for development and are able to evaluate the impact of leaders' actions on pupils' outcomes. For example, link governors regularly meet with relevant staff to monitor and evaluate improvements in mathematics and phonics. Leaders accurately identify that assessment systems for subjects other than reading, writing and mathematics require further development.

Leaders and staff have implemented a range of successful reading strategies in recent years. Pupils are motivated to read and a culture for reading is evident across the school. During the inspection, several pupils displayed a positive attitude to reading by choosing to read at lunchtime in the well-resourced library. Your positive work in this area has had a significant impact on pupils' outcomes by the end of key stage 2. In 2017, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected and higher standard was well above the national average.

One of the areas of improvement from the previous inspection was for pupils to develop an awareness of the different ways of life that exist in modern Britain. As a result of visits to different places of worship, pupils are now demonstrating a good understanding of other faiths. Staff have also forged links with a partner school in a different locality. Pupils talk confidently about the differences between their school and their partner school. Leaders have also improved the teaching and learning of phonics and mathematics, areas for improvement from the previous inspection report. Pupils' progress in phonics and mathematics has improved but this is yet to be reflected in pupils' outcomes.

The school offers a wide variety of extra-curricular and enrichment activities such as specialist music and physical education tuition, and a variety of residential visits. Woodland outdoor education provision is accessed by all pupils as part of the school's rich curriculum. Pupils enjoy participating in a wide range of sporting activities and are keen competitors. They recognise the important contribution physical education makes in developing a healthy lifestyle.

Leaders ensure that service children and their families are well supported by specialist liaison staff. Strong links exist and there is a weekly extra-curricular 'Spitfire club'. Comments from service children included, 'New people make friends really quickly.' Parents of service children assert that the school is caring and supportive in its approach and sends monthly pupil reports to those serving overseas.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are rigorous. There is a culture of vigilance and records are detailed. The single central record indicates that all required checks are made to ensure that staff and volunteers are suitable to work with children. Staff receive up-to-date training, including training to protect pupils from extremism and radicalisation. Governors work closely with senior leaders to ensure that the work to keep pupils safe is given high priority and meets current requirements.

Pupils feel safe in all parts of the school and say they are well cared for. They explain that any rare instances of bullying or name-calling are dealt with promptly and effectively. Pupils play well together, respect each other and follow the school rules. The overwhelming majority of parents agree that the school keeps pupils safe.

### **Inspection findings**

- Leaders have taken action to improve progress and attainment in mathematics. In 2017, key stage 1 attainment in mathematics was well below the national average at greater depth, while being broadly in line with the national average for the expected standard. By the end of key stage 2 in 2017, mathematics attainment was broadly in line with the national average. Staff have received training to ensure that pupils are given opportunities to apply their mathematical skills through reasoning. Additional resources have been purchased that help teachers set tasks requiring pupils to undertake problem-solving activities. Evidence of the positive effect of these initiatives can now be seen in pupils' work throughout key stage 2. However, pupils are not given a consistent level of challenge in mathematics across the school, particularly in developing their reasoning skills.
- In 2017, the proportion of pupils meeting the expected standard in phonics by the end of Year 1 and Year 2 was below the national average. Phonics teaching in Reception is not consistently precise enough to ensure good progress. Leaders recognised this and have prioritised improvements in the teaching of phonics, which are beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' outcomes. In Year 1, teaching staff show a good level of subject knowledge, and set work that is appropriately challenging. Current assessment information shows that attainment is rising, but this is not yet reflected in the published outcomes at the end of Year 1. Recent approaches to the teaching of phonics are not yet fully embedded across Reception, Year 1 and Year 2.
- The key stage 1 leader has a clear understanding of the priorities for improving teaching and learning and has been successful in driving forward improvements. Key stage 1 attainment in 2016 was below the national average in reading, writing and mathematics at the expected standard. Outcomes in 2017 were strong in reading and science in key stage 1. Attainment in writing and mathematics has improved, with mathematics being broadly in line with the national average in 2017. Good progress is evident in writing and mathematics books across Year 1 and Year 2.
- Leaders have taken action to ensure that systems and procedures for assessment are rigorous. Tracking groups of pupils' attainment and progress in English, mathematics and science is effective. As a result, pupils' attainment and progress have improved in the core subjects. However, assessment systems for subjects other than reading, writing, mathematics and science require further development.

## **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- recent approaches to the teaching of phonics are consistently embedded so that a higher proportion of pupils achieve the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check
- assessment of subjects other than reading, writing, mathematics and science is further developed
- pupils are provided with a consistent level of challenge in mathematics, particularly in developing their reasoning skills.

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

Yours sincerely

Emma Titchener  
**Ofsted Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I held meetings with you and other leaders. I also met with governors and a local authority representative. I spoke to pupils informally and formally. Together with you and other leaders, I visited eight lessons to observe learning and looked at pupils' books. I spoke to parents at the start of the day and considered 48 free-text responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. I also considered the responses from the online questionnaire completed by pupils and staff.

I scrutinised various documents including the school's self-evaluation, the improvement plan and the documents that you use to check the quality of teaching. You shared with me the most recent assessments of pupils' attainment and progress. We discussed the national test results and assessments undertaken by pupils in 2016 and 2017. I scrutinised the school's safeguarding procedures, including policies and checks on staff employed at the school, and checked the school's website. I also looked at the school's governing body meeting minutes and information about attendance, behaviour and safety.