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Mrs Della Peacock
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Peacock

Short inspection of St Michael's Church of England Combined School

Following my visit to the school on 4 July 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 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 are supported well by senior leaders and the staff team. Together, you strive to achieve the best for pupils. You have a good understanding of the school's strengths and where further improvements are needed. You have strengthened the school's strong relationships and engagement with parents and the village community. Parents wholeheartedly support the school and have helped to raise considerable funds, enabling you to significantly improve pupils' outdoor play areas. Parents speak highly of the school and value the strong sense of community. As one parent commented: 'St Michael's is everything a modern village school should be. It's inclusive, caring and committed.'

The school's Christian values of 'love, hope, respect and forgiveness' underpin the school's work. They are reflected in pupils' good behaviour, their kindness towards each other and their very positive attitudes. Pupils enjoy school. They say that their teachers make learning interesting and help them to learn well. Sport is a particular strength of the school, and the school provides a wealth of opportunities for pupils to attend sports clubs and participate in various tournaments. Pupils are very proud of the school's considerable success in inter-school competitions.

When the school was last inspected, inspectors recognised the school's many strengths. They also asked leaders to continue to improve the quality of teaching so that it is outstanding. Although not outstanding, the quality of teaching has remained good and has continued to strengthen. Additionally, inspectors asked

leaders to keep a check on pupils' progress and to make sure that boys and girls are making equally good progress and attain as well in mathematics as they do in reading and writing. You keep regular and careful checks on the progress of all groups of pupils. In 2017, while attainment in key stages 1 and 2 in mathematics was not as high as it was in reading and writing, it was above the national average. Although key stage 2 pupils' progress in mathematics was below average, particularly for girls, the majority of current pupils are now making stronger progress. Leaders have maintained children's high attainment in the early years. In 2017, every child achieved the early learning goals in reading, writing and mathematics.

You have, rightly, identified that disadvantaged pupils are currently not making good enough progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Senior leaders are now beginning to evaluate their work to support these pupils and focus support where it is having the greatest impact. We also agreed that pupils in key stage 1, particularly boys and low-attaining pupils, are not making strong enough progress in writing.

Governors are well informed through their regular visits to the school, the headteacher's detailed reports and the school's assessment information. They provide appropriate support and challenge to the school. Governors make sure that the government's additional funding is used well to support disadvantaged pupils. Nevertheless, governors acknowledge that they have not ensured that the school's website includes the required evaluation of the school's work to support disadvantaged pupils for the previous school year.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding at St Michael's and you know pupils and their families very well. Parents and staff are confident that the school keeps pupils safe. Record-keeping is systematic and enables you to keep a clear oversight of any concerns about pupils. You work effectively with outside agencies to ensure that pupils are kept safe. You provide appropriate training and regular updates for all staff so that they know how to recognise and report any concerns to you.

Pupils feel safe at school and know that if they have any worries they can speak to an adult in school. They know how to keep safe when using the internet, for example by not sharing personal information. You help pupils to learn about a wide variety of safeguarding topics such as road safety and stranger danger. Pupils also learn about keeping safe when cycling, including the importance of wearing a helmet and dismounting when they need to cross a road. Governors fulfil their responsibilities well through their regular checks on safeguarding procedures.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection, we focused on some specific aspects of the school's work, including safeguarding; how well leaders are ensuring that pupils are making good progress; key stage 2 pupils' achievement in mathematics, particularly girls; and how well the curriculum is enabling pupils to learn well in a range of subjects

and preparing them suitably for life in modern Britain.

- Your new tracking and assessment system allows you to have a clear overview of how well all groups of pupils are progressing. This enables you and teachers to identify promptly and support any pupils who are at risk of falling behind. You recognise the need to strengthen standards of reading further so that more pupils attain the higher standards. You have therefore introduced a new approach to reading. This is motivating pupils to read more frequently, and pupils now encounter a wider range of more challenging texts. As a result, pupils are making particularly strong progress in reading.
- Pupils in key stage 2 are making good progress in writing. However, you acknowledge that pupils in key stage 1 are not making consistently good progress in writing, particularly boys and low-attaining pupils. You also recognise that current disadvantaged pupils are not making strong enough progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Leaders' evaluation of the support for these pupils is also still at an early stage of development.
- You have worked effectively to improve standards in mathematics in key stage 2. The new mathematics scheme includes plentiful opportunities for pupils to develop their reasoning skills and solve problems. The school's consistent approach to calculation is helping pupils to develop secure formal methods of calculation. In 2017, there was a rise in the proportion of pupils who achieved the expected standards in mathematics at the end of key stage 2.
- The majority of pupils currently in key stage 2, including girls, are making good progress in mathematics. Teachers are taking effective action to support the very small number of girls in lower key stage 2 who are not progressing as quickly as expected. Additional support to develop these pupils' fluency and calculation is helping them to improve their skills and confidence.
- The curriculum is planned carefully and enables pupils to learn well in a suitably wide range of subjects. Detailed schemes of work set out the key milestones for pupils' learning in each subject. Provision for science is particularly strong, and pupils have many opportunities to investigate and conduct simple experiments. For example, older pupils have planned and carried out tests to investigate how heat accelerates evaporation and what materials can dissolve in water.
- In history, pupils learn about what life was like for people in the past, including social issues such as crime and punishment in Roman times. Pupils also develop and apply their writing skills well in different subjects, such as geography. When writing about volcanoes, some pupils used adventurous word choices to describe the flow of lava. For example, one pupil wrote, 'Silently, the red carpet of destruction snaked through the city, eating everything in its path.'
- The curriculum prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain. Through religious studies, pupils learn about other faiths and cultures. Assemblies and the curriculum contribute well to pupils' understanding of social and moral issues such as democracy, equality and racism.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- disadvantaged pupils make consistently good progress, and leaders evaluate more precisely the impact of their work to support these pupils
- the school's evaluation of the impact of the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is published on the school's website
- pupils in key stage 1 make more rapid progress in writing, particularly boys and those with low prior attainment.

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

Yours sincerely

Sue Cox
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Together with you, I visited all classes (except Year 6, as these pupils were visiting their new secondary schools on the day of the inspection). I looked at pupils' work and talked to them about their work. I met with you to discuss safeguarding and the school's self-evaluation. I also met with two senior leaders to discuss the curriculum and review pupils' learning. I held a meeting with five members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. I reviewed safeguarding documents, including the school's pre-employment checks on the suitability of staff to work with children. I reviewed a wide range of other documents and policies. I met with 12 pupils from key stages 1 and 2. I took into account the views of parents through the 80 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View and parents' free-text comments. I also considered two separate emails from parents, and met with parents at the start of the day. I took into account the 28 responses to Ofsted's staff survey and the 66 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.