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J Llewelyn  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Llewelyn

### **Short inspection of St Mary's C of E Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 3 October 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 October 2014.

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

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

As headteacher, you provide strong, decisive leadership. You have established a clear vision and strong commitment that every child should become a confident, independent learner. You work closely with staff to drive forward improvements, with a current focus on pupils' emotional well-being and raising standards in writing.

You, together with your staff and governors, know your school very well. You have successfully tackled areas that were identified in the previous inspection report as needing further improvement. Training for the leader of mathematics has strengthened leadership in this subject since the last inspection. As a result, most pupils make good progress in mathematics. Work in pupils' books shows an increasing level of challenge to help pupils achieve their potential. Most-able pupils, however, are not consistently challenged across the school. You have also worked effectively to raise standards in reading. Pupils read regularly and with enthusiasm, with the result that standards have improved to be in line with national averages. The proportion of key stage 1 pupils reaching greater depth also matches national averages. You are not complacent, however, and are wisely focusing on increasing the proportion of pupils across the school achieving at the higher standard in all subjects.

You are rightly proud of the school's community spirit and nurturing atmosphere.

You place each child's individual needs at the heart of all you do as a school. Parents could not speak highly enough of the efforts that staff make to understand the issues that vulnerable families face, and of the excellent training provided for staff to enable them to meet pupils' emotional needs. Pupils are reflective and insightful about their learning and enjoy the many opportunities that they have to research and present topics of interest to their teachers and peers.

The English lead is developing well in her new role of senior teacher. For example, she is working with staff to improve writing, following recommendations from the last inspection. Pupils' books show that they successfully use their phonics knowledge when writing. Children in Reception learn to form their letters correctly. There has not yet been time to see the full impact of her work on raising standards for the most able.

Leaders have recognised that activities do not always challenge children sufficiently in the early years. You have rightly prioritised ensuring that children in Reception are moved on in their learning as soon as they are ready.

Governance is highly effective. Governors have a realistic view of the school's strengths and areas for development. They carefully monitor school improvement planning, and they visit the school regularly to see for themselves how effectively plans are implemented. Governors ask challenging questions of school leaders and have benefited from the training and guidance that they have received on understanding data, and on the curriculum.

Behaviour and attendance are good. Pupils are polite and exceptionally insightful in how they are developing as learners and what they need to improve. They have a real zest for independent learning and work equally well with one another. There are many opportunities for pupils to take responsibility within the school, such as reporting to governors on the impact of leaders' work on emotional well-being. Year 6 are excellent role models to their Reception Year 'buddies'.

Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. All who responded to the online questionnaire reported that they would recommend the school to other parents. A typical comment made by parents was, 'I could not be happier or more proud of my choice of primary school for both my children.'

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You and your governors place a high priority on keeping pupils safe. The school has a growing number of very vulnerable pupils and families, and the school works exceptionally well with outside agencies to protect pupils from risk or harm. The knowledge and skills of staff are frequently updated. For example, all staff have received training in working with children who have suffered trauma. Pupils are taught how to regulate their emotions and to keep themselves safe online. In discussions during the inspection, pupils were very clear that they feel safe because bullying is rare and there is always a trusted adult in school who listens to their needs.

All safeguarding policies and procedures are audited regularly by leaders and governors so that they are in line with current statutory guidance, and staff are always alert about safeguarding issues.

Attendance of pupils is good overall, and rigorous systems are in place to check why pupils are absent and to hold parents to account.

### **Inspection findings**

- On this inspection, we looked at achievement in writing, how well pupils are supported and challenged and how well children in early years learn.
- Achievement in writing has lagged behind that of other subjects over time. Strategies to motivate and challenge pupils in reading has had a positive impact on writing. A whole school approach to raising the quality of pupils' skills in speaking and listening has also helped pupils to develop more adventurous language when writing. As a result, writing books show clear improvement in the challenge and range of work for most pupils. You rightly judge that this improvement in writing now needs to be sustained and developed to enable the most able pupils to consistently achieve as well as they can.
- You have supported subject leaders very well and have developed links with other schools in the locality to share expertise. Your school is outward-looking and innovative in its well-developed curriculum and in the high importance it places on training staff to support the emotional well-being of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, in order to help them develop into confident learners.
- There are very small, though increasing, numbers of disadvantaged pupils and, similarly, small but increasing numbers of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. The school tracks their progress and attainment diligently on an individual basis. Additional adult support is highly effective, and targeted interventions ensure that vulnerable pupils and those with SEN and/or disabilities make good progress from their starting points. However, the most able pupils are not routinely set work which stretches them to their full ability. Too few of these pupils reach the higher standard of which they are capable.
- Children in Reception settle happily into school routines. They cooperate well with one another and have a good relationship with adults in the setting. Parents praised the smooth transition from Nursery to Reception. However, children would benefit from more targeted opportunities to develop skills in mathematics and writing in the classroom and outdoor learning spaces. Focused activities do not always challenge the most able children. Leaders understand this and are already implementing plans for more effective teaching in Reception.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- learning opportunities in the early years are carefully planned to meet children's needs across the curriculum
- good practice is shared so that teaching, particularly in writing, continues to improve and that all pupils, including the most able, achieve the excellent standards of which they are capable across the curriculum.

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

Yours sincerely

Lynda Welham

**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During this inspection, I met with you, your English leader and your bursar, as well as representatives of the governing body and an officer from the local authority.

You and I made short visits to every classroom to observe the quality of pupils' learning, and I also looked at pupils' work from a selection of books across the school.

A wide range of documentary evidence was considered, including the school's evaluation of its own performance and plans for improvement. Information relating to pupils' current achievement and progress was scrutinised. I also checked the effectiveness of the school's safeguarding arrangements and attendance information.

I considered the views of parents and carers as they arrived at school, as well as the 28 responses to the Ofsted online survey 'Parent View', including their additional written comments. Five responses to the staff survey were also taken into account.

I observed behaviour at playtime. As well as talking to pupils in lessons, I met with a group of pupils from different year groups to talk about their experience of school.