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29 October 2018

Mr David White
Principal
St John's CofE Academy
Raymoth Lane
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Dear Mr White

Short inspection of St John's CofE Academy

Following my visit to the school on 11 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 your predecessor 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.

Your strong and steadfast leadership has been central to the continued improvement in the school during a period of staff change. Pupils and staff are flourishing in a community that has the highest expectations for learning for all.

You and your vice principal have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for development. You invest in developing your team. Staff told me that they appreciate the opportunities to develop their professional knowledge, including meeting with other schools to ensure that assessments are accurate. The multi-academy trust provides good support for the leadership team by making regular checks on progress and giving guidance about next steps.

Pupils arrive at school with smiles. They told me how much they enjoy all aspects of school from school dinners to running the 'daily mile'. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about lessons and how they learn lots through visits and literature. One group explained to me the significance of the Battle of Bosworth Field and another group were keen to tell me how attitudes to unmarried mothers have changed since the days of the Victorian workhouses. Pupils show an excitement about learning and told me 'everything at school is amazing' and 'learning is fun'. Most parents and carers who gave their views during the inspection praised the school, noting good behaviour, 'incredibly happy children' who are 'always eager to get to school in the morning and come home full of enthusiasm'.

Pupils are responsible as they move around the school. Playtimes and lunchtimes are sociable, fun and well supervised. Pupils are consistently polite to each other and to adults. In classes, most pupils were fully engaged in the learning activities provided by teachers and very keen to learn.

During the inspection, we discussed the areas where leaders need to improve further the performance of the school. You are aware that expectations of children's achievement need to be raised in the early years and that outcomes for disadvantaged children in early years and for pupils in key stage 1 need to improve.

Safeguarding is effective.

You, your leadership team and the multi-academy trust have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You have rigorous systems for ensuring that staff training is kept up to date so that staff are aware of risks and recent guidance, including extremism and radicalisation. Staff know exactly what to do if they have a concern about a pupil or an adult in school.

Pupils say that school is a safe place, staff are kind and problems 'get sorted'. Parents told me that they find staff approachable if there is a problem. Parents appreciate the work your team do to ensure that all children are welcomed and cherished.

You and your team make sure that records are well kept and stored securely. You seek guidance from external agencies where this is helpful to a child or a family.

Attendance is broadly average. You have strong systems for following up low attendance and checking on the safety of any pupils who are late for school. Staff understand what to do if they have concerns about a pupil who is missing from school.

Inspection findings

- 'Cubs', the Nursery provision which opened this September, is establishing itself very well. Relationships between staff, children and parents are excellent, so the children have settled quickly. The new classroom is a well-ordered and an exciting place to learn. During the inspection I saw how well children focus, concentrate on activities, enjoy listening to stories and share equipment when playing together. Parents told me how much their children are enjoying school, and especially learning letter sounds.
- The new early years leader has ensured that children are assessed accurately when they enter the early years. She is setting higher expectations for children and supporting the staff team to have the same high expectations. Nevertheless, you and the early years leader are aware that learning activities need to be better planned and resourced so that more children are challenged and achieve or exceed national expectations.
- The achievement of disadvantaged pupils in key stage 2 has been consistently strong in comparison to the national average for other pupils. Even so, you have

analysed assessment information from across the school and recognised the need to improve provision for disadvantaged pupils in key stage 1 and the early years. As a result, staff are identifying pupils who need support more quickly and putting in a wider range of interventions to support different needs. I saw the early impact of this work in pupils' books. For example, I could see how support to improve handwriting had enabled pupils to become more confident and fluent writers. However, in order to secure this improvement, leaders, including governors, need to sharpen the school's pupil premium strategy so that it is precise about the intended actions and their planned effect, checking arrangements and responsibilities.

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is a strength of the school. The school's positive and affirming ethos provides the foundation for the pupils' confident and responsible attitudes. Pupils told me how they have learned to stay safe when on the internet using SMART rules. Pupils say that bullying is very rare 'but it does get sorted'. They are aware of racism, and were clear that it is 'not a problem if a boy or girl wants to be different'. Pupils say that they enjoy assemblies, where they learn about respect and kindness. Pupils are being well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Minutes from governing body meetings show that governors ask a range of questions about the school's performance. Governors are willing to learn. Many have attended training to support them with their responsibilities, including safeguarding, safer recruitment and governors visits. Governors are keen to work with the multi-academy trust to review their effectiveness and strengthen their work even further.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- improvements in the early years continue so that a greater proportion of children meet and exceed early learning goals
- leadership of the pupil premium strategy is strengthened so that outcomes for disadvantaged pupils in key stage 1 and early years match standards nationally.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the director of education for the Diocese of Southwell, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Nottinghamshire County Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Carol Smith
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I carried out a learning walk with you and the vice principal. We visited classes in early years, key stage 1 and key stage 2 to observe learning, talk with pupils and look at pupils' books. I worked with you and the vice principal to look at samples of pupils' work from across the school to consider the standards of work and progress being made.

I talked with a group of pupils and also spoke to pupils informally at playtime and lunchtime. I observed pupils' behaviour at different times during the school day and examined school records relating to behaviour.

I held meetings with you, the assistant principal and other members of staff to discuss the school's work. I met with members of the governing body and the chief executive officer of the trust.

I reviewed school documentation, including your improvement plan, self-evaluation summary, policies and documents relating to safeguarding.

I took into account 26 responses to the online survey Parent View, including 25 free-text comments. I also spoke informally to parents at the start of the school day. I considered 27 responses to the staff questionnaire and 57 responses to the online pupil questionnaire.