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Mrs Alison Stephenson  
Headteacher  
St Martin's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, Scarborough  
Holbeck Hill  
Scarborough  
North Yorkshire  
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Dear Mrs Stephenson

### **Short inspection of St Martin's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, Scarborough**

Following my visit to the school on 16 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 April 2014.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. This is a result of the decisive, focused action that you have taken since taking up your appointment in April 2017. Supported by your governors, the diocese and the local authority, you have worked with great determination and effort to improve the school. Your relentless drive for continued improvement has led to greater consistency in teaching and improved outcomes for pupils.

St Martin's is a vibrant, cohesive community and is indeed, as parents and carers and leaders all affirm, a family. Leaders have established an effective partnership between home and school. Pupils are happy and enjoy coming to school. As one pupil told me, 'It is great – every day is fun and we learn something new'. Parents highly value the contact that they have with your staff. Parents who spoke with me during the inspection were very positive about the school. Comments included, 'a wonderful child-centred school', 'a real family atmosphere' and, 'I'm proud to be part of St Martin's and my children feel the same'.

Leaders and governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and have been resolute in tackling identified areas for improvement. You have made significant changes to many aspects of the school. Leaders are always open to new ideas and are not afraid to seek support from others in order to improve the school for the benefit of pupils. Your close work with the diocese and the local authority is indicative of this.

Leaders have refocused the way in which mathematics is taught across the school. Following a local authority review and training from a specialist adviser, the teaching of mathematics has improved. Teachers have been supported and encouraged to develop their practice. As a result of this, teachers are able to deepen pupils' reasoning and develop their understanding. This has led to improved progress.

At the last inspection, leaders were asked to improve the teaching of writing, so that more attention was paid to pupils' grammar, punctuation and spelling. You have carefully reviewed the school's approach to these aspects. You have taken steps to ensure that teachers use all areas of the curriculum to teach these important skills. The recent introduction of a new and structured spelling scheme has been positively received by the pupils and is beginning to improve their spelling. Pupils work in a personalised way to improve their spelling techniques. However, the teaching of grammar, punctuation and spelling is not fully embedded across the curriculum.

Pupils' behaviour around the school is excellent, as is their engagement in lessons. Pupils are courteous, well mannered and friendly. They listen well and willingly follow adults' instructions. Pupils are keen to do well and are confident and self-assured learners. They make the most of the opportunities available to them. There was a real buzz in the main hall at breaktime when the Year 6 pupils were demonstrating their enterprise skills in the '£5 challenge'. Pupils had devised innovative, creative and practical ways to raise money for their chosen charity while developing their business acumen and improving their mathematics. Delicious cakes, skilfully designed motivational cards and beautifully hand-painted rocks were just some of the many fund-raising ideas shown. Younger pupils told me that they were already planning their ideas.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You work well with other staff and external agencies to ensure that safeguarding is the highest priority. Leaders have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and are central to the work of the school. Leaders ensure that staff are kept fully trained and aware of the latest guidance to keep pupils safe. You have established a culture of vigilance among the staff. Where there are concerns, your meticulous records outline a clear chronology of communication and action. Leaders work regularly with parents and other agencies to support vulnerable pupils. Indeed, leaders work tirelessly to maintain contact with, and support for, families to ensure the well-being of pupils who are at risk of harm.

Pupils feel safe and say that they are well cared for by all adults in the school. They also say that they help each other to stay safe. Pupils know what bullying is and feel that it is not common at St Martin's. They accept that people can 'fall out' and be unkind, but are very confident in the support available to them when this happens. Pupils are aware of how to stay safe in a variety of situations, such as when working on the internet. They also know what to do in the event of an emergency at school.

## Inspection findings

- Leadership in early years is impressive. Leaders know the children and their families well. This enables the leaders to have a clear understanding of the needs of each child to support their learning and development. The outdoor area is carefully designed to support children's learning and development.
- There is a good range of physical activities, including those specifically aimed at developing boys' interest in their learning. The introduction of 'base groups' has enabled teachers to focus on improving children's phonics, reading and writing. As a result, children get off to a very good start in early years, although activities to support the progress of boys need to be developed further. The proportion of children attaining a good level of development rose sharply in 2018.
- Leaders clearly prioritise transition between classes and key stages. Highly successful liaison between leaders and Nursery providers enables a positive and supportive start for the children in the Reception class. Your effective transition arrangements, such as the 'I am special booklets', mean that parents feel secure in bringing their children to St Martin's.
- In key stage 1, phonics is taught well. In the lesson that we visited, Year 1 pupils were writing a list about farmyard animals. Pupils were excited about their writing and most were able to write clearly on the lines with appropriate finger spaces between words. Most-able pupils were able to demonstrate their knowledge of the sounds that sets of letters represent. However, they struggled to do this out of a set sequence. Boys were less confident and needed more support with their learning. As a result, the proportion of boys achieving the phonics standard at the end of Year 1 is lower.
- Our visits to classrooms and work in pupils' books confirmed that teaching across all key stages and subjects remains good. The impact of your work to improve mathematics was clearly evident. Mathematics is a firm favourite among pupils. They talked with enthusiasm about their learning, describing it as both 'challenging and fun'. Teachers have high expectations for all pupils. As a result, pupils across the school are making good progress. Teachers explain mathematical concepts with clarity and precision. In a lesson on regular and irregular shapes, Year 6 pupils were given the opportunity to demonstrate their understanding and to use subject-specific vocabulary in their work.
- In 2017, pupils' progress in writing was well below the national average. You took clear and successful action. As a result, standards in reading and writing have improved. You took the decision to remove stand-alone grammar lessons so that teachers would purposefully weave the teaching of grammar, punctuation and spelling into all aspects of the curriculum. This work is starting to be embedded across the curriculum. The 2018 published data shows that this has had a positive impact upon pupils' progress.
- The standards reached by pupils at the end of Year 6 are rising. Provisional data shows that in 2018, the proportion of pupils who achieved the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics was above national averages. However, there is still some variability between groups of pupils, especially between boys and girls and for disadvantaged pupils.

- Governance is strong. Governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. They have successfully reorganised and refocused as a group. They offer clear, appropriate and effective challenge to school leaders. Governors are not complacent. They understand their own training needs and are committed to working collectively for the good of the school and the local community.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the variability in progress between groups of pupils, especially between boys and girls, is reduced
- the teaching of grammar, punctuation and spelling is improved and embedded throughout the curriculum.

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

Yours sincerely

Daniel Murray  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with you, your deputy headteacher and a group of governors, including the chair of the governing body. I also met with your early years leader as well as your leaders of English and mathematics. Together, you and I visited classrooms to observe teaching and to look at pupils' work. I also looked in depth at pupils' writing books and other work. I met with a representative of the local authority and with the deputy director for education in the Diocese of York. I met with a group of pupils from Years 3 to 6. I listened to eight pupils read. I also listened informally to pupils read during my visits to lessons. I took into account 72 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 23 questionnaire responses from staff. I considered 89 responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire. I spoke to parents at the start and end of the school day. I evaluated recent information in relation to pupils' progress throughout the school, the school's self-evaluation document, the school improvement plan and a sample of monitoring records. I also met with you as designated safeguarding leader and reviewed documentation and records about how you keep your pupils safe.