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Dear Mrs Stallwood-Barnes

### **Short inspection of St Mary's Church of England (Aided) Primary School, Chipping Norton**

Following my visit to the school on 7 November 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 2015.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school and has implemented several improvements since the last inspection. St Mary's Primary School offers a very nurturing and inclusive community atmosphere. Leaders, governors and staff share high ambitions for the pupils in your care and are passionate about improving the quality of provision for all pupils, particularly that of the most vulnerable. One parent spoke for many with these comments:

'I think the teachers at St. Mary's do a wonderful job of inspiring and developing the children. I think it's quite a diverse and inclusive school, and the teachers work hard to create a supportive and nurturing environment for everyone.'

In the past, pupils have made strong rates of progress in reading and writing by the end of key stage 2, and they continue to do so. The teaching of phonics, reading and writing skills is well planned and effective. However, in 2018, outcomes in mathematics dipped significantly and the progress that pupils made from their starting points was below average. Recognising the need for improvements, you have reorganised specialist teaching, introduced new mathematics assessments and training for teachers, and so have reinvigorated the teaching and learning of mathematics across the school. Current pupils' work shows that they are making stronger progress in mathematics than in the past, particularly in the younger year groups. Senior leaders and governors are very aware that these improvements are ongoing and that there is more to do to ensure that key stage 2 pupils are fully

challenged, especially the most able pupils. At the same time, you have continued to improve teaching in reading and writing. As a result, all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, make good progress from their starting points. Leaders are now rightly focused on a programme of raising the level of challenge across the wider curriculum.

In lessons, pupils have very positive attitudes, they engage well with teachers and teaching assistants and work hard. These strong relationships cultivate a sense of teamwork and trust. All pupils are encouraged to take pride in their presentation of their work to make it the best it can be. Pupils respect each other's ideas and they work and play very well together. A small minority of parents reported worries about behaviour. However, records show, and pupils agree, that incidents of poor behaviour are rare and, when they do occur, they are managed effectively.

Senior leaders ensure that individually tailored support is offered to pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), and that they are well supported both pastorally and academically. Working with the local community, leaders gained funding to recently redevelop the school's nurture room. This facility now offers valuable care and support to pupils who have social, emotional or mental health needs. Parents are quick to recognise the quality of provision on offer, expressed in comments such as:

'St Mary's understands [my child's] anxieties and, hence, the behaviour that can stem from them, and is expert at managing it within the classroom. They have helped [my child] to settle and are excellent at communicating with me and listening to any concerns I have.'

You have a clear overview of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. However, some of the school's record-keeping and self-evaluation lack detail and precision. This means that development plans, although identifying appropriate priorities, lack clear milestones to measure leaders' progress towards meeting the stated aims. As a result, although staff and governors share a pride in the school's strengths, they are less clear on how to measure the impact of their initiatives to address weaker areas. For example, governors pay regular visits to the school and are kept up to date via leaders' tracking information and reports. However, governors have not challenged leaders over the inaccuracy of their tracking systems in mathematics last year or how the new approaches to teaching this year will ensure more rapid progress. The diocese and local authority are aware of this and have plans in place to support leaders with this work.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You ensure that the school has robust procedures and well-understood systems to manage safeguarding requirements. Leaders maintain detailed records and ensure a culture of vigilance at the school. All staff have appropriate and up-to-date training so that they can spot and deal with any problems quickly. You are proactive, liaising with external agencies, and challenging, where necessary, to ensure timely and appropriate support is sourced to help vulnerable pupils.

Most parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, confirmed that their children are happy and feel safe. Pupils report that they know how to keep themselves safe, including when on the internet. Pupils told me that they know who to go to should they have any concerns, and that they trust staff to resolve them. Pastoral and teaching staff work closely together to ensure that breaktimes and lunchtimes are orderly and that children socialise well together.

Overall, pupils' attendance is in line with the national average. You recognise that some groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities, had poor attendance rates in the past. Leaders promote the value of good attendance well. You have worked closely with parents and outside agencies to support improvements.

### **Inspection findings**

- During this inspection, as well as evaluating safeguarding arrangements, I focused on specific aspects of the school's provision, including:
  - the progress that pupils make in Reception and key stage 1
  - the attendance of some groups of pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities
  - how well leaders have responded to address weak outcomes in mathematics
  - the quality of learning across the wider curriculum.
- In Reception Year, the indoor and outdoor learning environments offer a rich selection of engaging and stimulating learning opportunities. Children gain confidence from their good relationships with staff and from collaborative play with others. Detailed tracking systems are used to inform teaching approaches and to map the good progress that children make from their starting points. This ensures that children develop a suitable range of skills that prepare them well for key stage 1.
- Outcomes in reading and writing dipped by the end of Year 2 in 2017. Teachers have worked hard to address this, and 2018 outcomes, together with current pupils' work, show that they are making better progress in these areas. Effective teaching of phonics and a focus on promoting oracy, reading and story-telling skills during Reception and key stage 1 helps to foster a love of reading. More still needs to be done to challenge the most able readers and improve the proportion of pupils working at a greater depth of understanding.
- Overall attendance is regularly in line with or slightly above national figures, and leaders take appropriate actions to challenge improvements to target groups of pupils. Historically, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND has been well below that of their peers. However, school records show that this was due to complex and multiple issues faced by these pupils. Staff ensure appropriate and timely action is taken to support vulnerable pupils and their families when the need arises. As a result, current overall attendance figures, including the attendance figures of these groups, have improved slightly.

- Leaders ensure high-quality additional help is provided for disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND. Teachers and teaching assistants work well together to support any pupils who are falling behind. Effective assessment and tracking systems, together with timely interventions and support, ensure that these pupils make strong progress from their starting points.
- This year, training for staff, coupled with more effective deployment of specialist teaching in mathematics, is now improving pupils' verbal reasoning and their problem-solving competencies. In addition, leaders have used their links with other local schools to seek additional resources and strategies to improve and enrich learning in mathematics. New resources for assessment have been sourced, although it is too soon yet to see the impact of these on refining teachers' planning.
- The work that I looked at in pupils' books indicates that teachers' expectations in mathematics in upper key stage 2 are suitably high. Leaders and governors have rightly identified that improving the pace of learning and increasing the level of challenge within mathematics lessons, particularly for the most able pupils, is the school's top priority. The diocese is aware of this need and has plans in place to support leaders with this work.
- The school offers a broad and rich curriculum which has strengths in religious education and music and prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain. Pupils and parents are particularly proud of the achievements of the school's singing club. In addition, they value the wide assortment of sporting clubs, trips and visits on offer.
- In most classes, pupils' books show that they are challenged to apply their extended writing skills. However, mathematics skills are not yet routinely promoted as well across the curriculum. Leaders are currently engaged in improving the depth of teachers' planning and the sequencing of key knowledge and concepts across the wider curriculum. This work is needed as some teachers do not routinely offer sufficiently challenging tasks in science and humanities to promote deep thinking and the development of subject-specific skills. Consequently, progress is not yet as consistently strong across the broader curriculum as it is in English and mathematics.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to embed recent improvements to teaching and learning in mathematics, particularly in key stage 2
- the school's self-evaluation and development planning contain deeper analysis and clearer targets for improvement so that governors are better equipped to hold leaders to account
- pupils are given more consistently challenging tasks in science and the wider curriculum so that their subject-specific knowledge and depth of thinking improves.

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 Oxfordshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Matthew Newberry  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

I held meetings with you, other school leaders, two members of the governing body and representatives of the local authority and the diocese. Jointly with leaders, I visited classes to look at teaching and learning. I looked at a range of pupils' work in their exercise books. I observed pupils' behaviour at breaktime and held informal conversations with small groups of pupils.

I took into account 13 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including 12 free-text comments. I also spoke to several parents at the beginning of the school day. The views expressed in the staff survey were considered. During the inspection, a wide range of documents were reviewed, including the school self-evaluation and development plan, feedback from the local authority, pupils' progress information and safeguarding policies, procedures and checks.