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Mrs Margaret Gwynne
Interim Headteacher
St George Church of England Primary School
Queen's Parade
Brandon Hill
Bristol
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Dear Mrs Gwynne

Short inspection of St George Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 4 December 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 May 2015.

This school continues to be good.

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

The school has gone through significant changes in recent years. There have been two changes of headteacher in the last two years. You were appointed interim headteacher in September 2018. The school joined a local school, St Michael on the Mount CE VC Primary, to form a federation in October 2018. The governing body of the federation plans to appoint a substantive headteacher to lead both schools in the federation early in 2019.

As interim headteacher, you are building on the significant achievements of the previous headteacher. You are an effective leader, showing determination and passion to improve the school further. Staff, parents and carers speak highly of you. You reach out to your local community in a very real way. Parents welcome your presence at the school and the interventions you and your staff have made on their behalf. One parent spoke for many, saying:

'This school is brilliant. The interim head, teachers and all the supporting staff have made this school a wonderful place for my child. With all the changes that have been made, the teachers have risen to the challenge and kept the family-like feel to learning.'

You effectively lead an enthusiastic staff team that is successfully providing exciting learning experiences for all your pupils. In 2017, pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics was in the top 2% of schools in the country – a substantial

improvement on the previous year. In 2018, you maintained these strong gains, and progress in reading, writing and mathematics continued to be well above average. Disadvantaged pupils did equally well.

Pupils enter the school with low starting points. Pupils make secure improvements year on year because teaching builds on what they know, can do and understand. The school's approaches – including reading high-quality texts and providing an interesting and motivating curriculum – are effective in extending and deepening pupils' knowledge and skills.

Despite these strong gains, you show no signs of complacency. For instance, you recognise that, although pupils' progress has improved, still too few pupils are reaching the higher standards in the early years and in key stage 1.

Governors are ambitious champions for the school and provide the right balance of support and challenge to leaders. They understand the importance of holding leaders to account and they make sure that they are well informed about how well the school is doing. You and your governors have a good understanding of what the school does well and what it needs to do to be even better.

At the previous inspection, the school was asked to develop the quality of teaching so that pupils make stronger progress and to make sure that pupils act on the advice that teachers give them on how to improve their work. You and your predecessor headteacher have made sure that challenging teaching is spurring pupils on to make strong gains in their learning, particularly at key stage 2. Precise and helpful feedback given to pupils by their teachers is routinely followed through in all classes.

Safeguarding is effective

You and your staff are vigilant in ensuring that pupils are kept safe. All pupils – particularly those that may be thought of as vulnerable or at risk because of circumstances in their lives – are kept safe and out of harm. Strong pastoral and multi-agency work provides concerted support to vulnerable pupils and their families. Staff make prompt referrals of any concerns, reliably using the school's well-established reporting systems and their comprehensive knowledge of the local community.

You make sure that pupils have access to a wealth of curriculum and pastoral guidance so that they know how to keep themselves safe. You review the needs of your vulnerable pupils daily. Staff use the full range of information available to them to focus on pupils with the most urgent need, including those new to the country and those new to learning English.

Leaders ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that effective action is taken to safeguard pupils. Training is up to date, records are meticulously maintained and the pre-employment checks on teachers and other staff are thorough.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection, we agreed the particular aspects of the school's work on which the inspection would focus. The first line of enquiry considered how well leaders are improving pupils' attendance and reducing the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent. Attendance has been below the national average and persistent absence has been high in recent years. You have successfully tackled this problem of weak attendance. You have reached out to parents of pupils who have poor attendance in an empathetic – yet uncompromising – way. You have used a wide range of strategies to make sure that such pupils attend school regularly, including timely telephone calls and texts which are consistently followed up. Leaders have worked sympathetically with families to remove barriers to regular attendance.
- Persistent absence has been substantially reduced and overall attendance has improved compared with the same period last year. School data shows that overall attendance now stands at 96.8%, slightly above the national average. There is little difference in the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and others. There is still a small core of pupils whose attendance is erratic, but the number of these pupils has been greatly reduced over the last year. The school has a good knowledge and understanding of the circumstances of each of the persistent absentees and does all it can to ensure that the progress of pupils is not held back by erratic attendance.
- The next line of enquiry assessed how leaders ensure that the recent gains in the progress being made by pupils in key stage 2 are being sustained. Our visits to the key stage 2 classes and a scrutiny of pupils' books showed that strong progress in reading, writing and mathematics is being maintained. You and your predecessor headteacher have introduced a wide range of strategies to raise teachers' expectations and improve challenge in reading. The number and range of fiction and non-fiction books available to pupils in class have greatly increased. Throughout key stage 2, pupils have become regular, enthusiastic and fluent readers.
- Staff show enthusiasm and determination to make sure that pupils continue to make strong progress in mathematics. Work in books shows that increasing proportions of pupils are able to solve complex number problems confidently and apply concepts to unfamiliar situations. Across all year groups, mathematical work is increasingly demanding. Many of the most able pupils in the Year 5/6 class are given opportunities to deepen their understanding of concepts and find new ways of applying ideas.
- You are continuing to make sure that there is a consistent and challenging approach to writing across all classes. Our scrutiny of pupils' writing showed that their confident grasp of grammar is leading to increasing fluency in their writing. Pupils write with stamina and show a sophisticated use of language.
- The final line of enquiry evaluated the impact of leaders' strategies to ensure that more pupils reach the higher standards in the early years and at key stage 1. Most Reception children in the Reception/Year 1 class make good progress in reading in the year. The Year 1 pupils in that class continue to catch up so that

over 90% meet the required standard in the phonics screening check to read words accurately. Many Year 2 pupils in the Year 2/3/4 class who have previously average or low attainment make strong progress in reading. As a result, by the end of key stage 1, pupils' attainment in reading has been close to or above the national average for the last three years. The proportion of pupils working at greater depth in reading, however, remains below average.

- Pupils are making stronger gains in their spelling and more are able to confidently spell difficult words that allow them to write expressively. Pupils' workbooks show a steady improvement in their handwriting. Work in books shows that increasing proportions of pupils in the Reception/Year 1 class and the Year 2 pupils in the mixed-age Year 2/3/4 class are developing their comprehension of number well. Many are able to use calculation to solve problems appropriate to their age. Nevertheless, leaders accept that there is more to do to ensure that all pupils in Reception and key stage 1 make the strong progress of which they are capable so that more exceed their early learning goals or are working at greater depth.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the improvements to the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics in Reception and key stage 1 are consolidated and continued so that a greater proportion of pupils reach the higher standards.

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

Yours sincerely

Michael Merchant
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I spoke with you, your teachers, the designated leader for safeguarding and the chair of the governing body. I also met with a representative from Bristol local authority. We made visits to lessons to observe pupils' learning and to scrutinise their work. I talked to pupils in lessons to gather their views. I listened to pupils read.

I considered a range of documentary evidence, including: development plans; external reports on the school's effectiveness; school performance information;

monitoring records; analysis of pupils' attendance; and safeguarding documentation.

In addition, I took account of 10 responses to the Parent View online survey and the free-text messaging service. I gathered the views of staff through discussions during the inspection.