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Ms Joanne Hester  
Headteacher  
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Dear Ms Hester

### **Short inspection of St John's CofE School, Stanmore**

Following my visit to the school on 9 January 2019, 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 June 2015.

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

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

You and other senior leaders have focused your work on the areas identified for improvement at the time of the previous inspection. Pupils' progress in reading and writing in key stage 1 has improved as a result of your efforts. Pupils' attainment in 2018 was well above average in reading and writing and above average in mathematics. The proportion of pupils working at greater depth was also above national averages in all three subjects in this key stage.

Senior leaders, including governors, are highly ambitious for all pupils. After a period of instability in the senior team, leaders have shown the tenacity and determination to achieve a good degree of success. The team now has greater capacity to secure improvements in the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. You and senior leaders know precisely what the key priorities are for the school. Indeed, the key lines of enquiry for this inspection are replicated in the school development plan.

Foremost, you are working to make sure all pupils in key stage 2 make consistently strong and sustained progress. A high proportion of Year 6 pupils in 2018 made below-average progress. This was especially so for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Your evidence demonstrates that this was cohort-specific. Nevertheless, this is explored further in the inspection findings, below.

The school is a welcoming, vibrant and nurturing place for pupils to learn and thrive. You invest heavily in fostering the well-being of staff; the staff questionnaire was overwhelmingly positive about the support they receive. You

also recognise that pupils' personal development is at the heart of academic success. Pupils have access to counselling, one-to-one mentoring and play therapy. Almost all parents are appreciative of the school's work, as reflected in the Parent View online questionnaire.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Senior leaders, including governors, ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and reflect all the latest statutory requirements. The capacity and rigour of the safeguarding team has been strengthened and its work is monitored by two governors. The recommendations of a recent safeguarding audit have all been implemented effectively.

There is a strong sense of commitment from leaders and staff to ensure that safeguarding policies are implemented consistently and rigorously. All referrals are followed up relentlessly to ensure that the right support reaches pupils who need it, working effectively with external partners.

Pupils talk with maturity about how the school helps them to stay safe and identify potential dangers, including when using the internet. Pupils explained the various ways in which they can tell adults about their worries or concerns. Pupils say that there is no bullying in school. They know what their rights and responsibilities are. They have great respect, for themselves and others. Pupils understand their role in preventing all types of potential bullying and will report any behaviour which they believe to be inappropriate. Their message is emphatic, 'Stand up to bullies.'

### **Inspection findings**

- The first line of enquiry focused on the progress made by disadvantaged pupils in key stage 2 in reading and writing. This was because the 2018 results showed weak progress and low attainment for this group of pupils, resulting in the commissioning of an external review of the pupil premium funding.
- A senior leader now has responsibility for the impact of this funding on pupils' achievement, overseen by two governors. A good start has been made in implementing the external review's recommendations.
- Leaders' analysis of assessment information has improved. You are better able to identify exactly what type and level of support disadvantaged pupils and other pupils need. Provision, including that for disadvantaged pupils with SEND, is more sharply focused on their often multiple and complex needs. Teachers are held to account for the progress these and other groups of pupils make. Following regular meetings, assessments and planning, teachers, together with teaching assistants, provide tailored activities to embed key skills and understanding.
- Teaching targets pupils' speaking and listening skills. Lessons build systematically on what pupils know and can do. Pupils' writing skills are practised and extended through discussions, role play, drafting and editing. Pupils have clear guidance and support on how to improve their writing skills. Reading skills are developed through well-structured daily lessons and whole-class reading. This sharply focused provision has had a good impact on the

progress of disadvantaged pupils. School information confirms that pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, in all year groups made at least good progress in reading and writing in 2018. Assessments are accurate because of frequent checks made within the school and across the cluster group of schools. Work in books demonstrates strong progress for all groups of pupils.

- The second line of enquiry explored pupils' achievement in mathematics, where 2018 key stage 2 results were weakest. Following incisive analysis, strategies have recently been implemented to address gaps in pupils' learning. These included difficulties with technical vocabulary and lack of confidence in mathematical reasoning. Senior leaders trialled an approach to promoting these skills which is now being rolled out to all year groups. Pupils now learn key skills sequentially and through concrete and pictorial activities, reinforced with opportunities to develop mathematical vocabulary and opportunities for reasoning.
- Leaders and teachers identify any pupils at risk of underachieving. Those pupils receive additional support throughout the week, both before school and within lessons. Likewise, the most able pupils have additional activities to promote greater mastery and depth of learning.
- Nevertheless, there remain inconsistencies in teaching, including the guidance pupils are given to improve their skills and mathematical understanding. Occasionally, too, pupils are not provided with work which challenges them in their mathematical thinking. Overall, the success of the school's new approach to teaching mathematics has yet to be demonstrated. Even so, current school information suggests that pupils are making improved progress in mathematics and this is confirmed by inspection findings.
- The final line of enquiry was to look at the school's work to promote the attendance of disadvantaged pupils, which was a priority identified in the school's self-evaluation.
- Overall, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils is broadly in line with the national average, but some pupils in this group have had higher levels of absenteeism in the past. These pupils and their families have been provided with individual support to help them improve their attendance. It is evident from case studies that you have had considerable success with this, meaning that these pupils are in school regularly and able to learn.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- all the recommendations of the pupil premium review are implemented swiftly
- there is greater consistency in the guidance pupils are given in mathematics, particularly to move pupils on to more challenging work when they are ready.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the diocese of London, and the director of children's services for Harrow. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Mary Hinds  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During this inspection, I held meetings with you and your senior leadership team. I met with representatives from the governing body, including the chair. I met the designated safeguarding lead and two deputies, as well as leaders with specific responsibilities. I met a group of Year 3 and 4 pupils. I held a telephone conversation with the head of school effectiveness and the local authority education lead for the multi-agency safeguarding hub. I also met with the diocese's school improvement adviser. I visited classrooms across key stage 2 with members of your leadership team. I reviewed a range of documentation related to the school's work, including the school's self-evaluation and achievement information. I scrutinised records related to safeguarding, including the single central record. I considered 122 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 42 responses to the pupil survey. The views of staff were evaluated through the 35 responses to the online survey.