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Mrs Nicola Smith  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Smith

### **Short inspection of St Nicholas CofE Primary**

Following my visit to the school on 24 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 have continued to develop a team of skilled leaders and teachers who are effective in promoting pupils' progress. Since the previous inspection, you have begun to extend the size of the school. There are now two classes in the Reception Year. Despite the challenges of expansion and an extensive new build on site, you have maintained a clear focus on continuing to raise standards. Overall standards at the end of key stage 2 have risen securely over the past three years and are now in line with the national average.

At the time of the previous inspection, you were asked to involve staff more in understanding the school's drive for progress and to sharpen the school improvement plan. The staff's highly positive response in their survey shows their good morale and understanding of what the school is planning to achieve. You have ensured that steps taken to improve the quality of teaching have been fully understood. Consequently, during the inspection it was evident that teachers are confident in using the school's new approaches to teaching, for example in mathematics. The teaching of reading and mathematics is now demonstrating the increased challenge which you were asked to promote. The school improvement plan is clear in its intentions and regularly monitored by governors. You have set ambitious targets for pupils' attainment, but the improvement plan does not show how actions will be measured for their impact on teaching or achievement.

You ensure that learning takes place in a warm and purposeful atmosphere, and pupils are proud of their achievements. Teachers ensure that colourful displays celebrate the breadth of the curriculum and pupils' improving skills and knowledge in art and history, for example. Most parents and carers recognise the good work of the school in developing their children's well-being and progress. As one parent expressed: 'All staff strive to make St Nicholas a happy, safe place for children to learn.' A small number of parents who responded to the online survey Parent View indicated that they felt less positive about some changes to the school over time. However, while not all changes have been popular, they have been necessary and well chosen to maintain a good quality of teaching and promote pupils' progress and safety.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders have established policies and procedures that contribute effectively to a strong culture of vigilance for pupils' safety. Checks to ensure that all adults who work with pupils are safe to do so are efficiently recorded. All training is up to date, and staff have embraced the new and secure system for recording concerns that pupils may be at risk of harm. Parents spoken with and those who recorded their views on the online survey Parent View value the support the school offers at times of difficulty. Leaders do not shy away from referring their concerns to external agencies when needed and challenging those agencies if support for pupils is not forthcoming. Leaders and governors are aware of, and take steps to limit, local risks to pupils' well-being, including the need to prevent pupils from being exposed to radicalisation.

Governors are also vigilant on matters of safeguarding. They make detailed checks, including to secure the safety of the site during the current new build. They have improved the security of the entrance to the building, so that pupils and staff are safe during the day.

Pupils are taught about safety, including in the use of the internet. Pupils could name a member of staff they can confide in if they have a problem. Pupils are realistic and recognise that there may have been a few incidents of bullying in the past, but say that is not the case now. They value the opportunity to raise concerns through the 'rainbow box' and say these are dealt with. Parents are confident that their children are safe in the school. Pupils attend well, and the need for exclusion has reduced markedly.

### **Inspection findings**

- During this inspection, I reviewed the progress of the most able pupils in writing. I also reviewed the progress of children in early years in writing and number. My last area of enquiry was the effectiveness of leaders and teachers in promoting the inclusion and progress of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
- The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in writing at the end of key stage 2 has risen. However, the proportion who reach the higher standard

has been low at both key stage 1 and 2. Recent steps to improve pupils' handwriting and spelling are having a positive effect on the accuracy of pupils' writing and the presentation of work. Pupils' responses in lessons show that they are acquiring skills in grammar that at least match those expected for their age. The most able, for example, can describe grammatical features such as relative clauses and show where they have included them in their writing.

- Pupils write frequently, and teachers use interesting contexts to promote pupils' enjoyment of writing. Pupils have good ideas and express them in a lively way. For example, pupils in Year 2 used an interesting range of adjectives to describe dragons. However, at times pupils' writing in key stage 1 is not well organised. Teachers are not consistently guiding the most able pupils to craft their ideas into pieces of quality writing to demonstrate their deeper learning.
- Teachers recognise that many pupils in key stage 2 lack the range of vocabulary needed to write sufficiently concisely at the higher standard. However, teachers in Years 4, 5 and 6 were seen to challenge and guide pupils to sharpen their writing to make it more succinct. Teachers are helping pupils to develop the form and vocabulary needed for different styles of writing. Pupils are adventurous in their choices of vocabulary, but on occasions teachers do not help them recognise that they have misunderstood the meaning of a word. This reduces particularly the quality of their expressive writing. When using more technical vocabulary, as for example in Year 6 when writing about the Mayan civilisation, pupils are more successful in showing their deeper knowledge.
- Standards in early years have varied in recent years. The proportion of children reaching the early learning goals in number has been below the national average. This was also the case this year in writing. Teachers are now improving children's writing more securely, particularly in developing accurate letter formation. The most able children are making stronger progress this year and already write simple sentences confidently. These children are also making strong progress in number. Their recent work shows they can make simple calculations with numbers beyond 20.
- Teachers in early years make accurate assessments of children's skills and knowledge when they start school. They quickly identify children who need additional help to reach the expected standard in their knowledge of number. Children are given regular help, and targets are set for improvement. Currently, however, the independent learning experiences provided do not sufficiently deepen and consolidate these children's knowledge of number. This limits their ability to catch up.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND across the school is much higher than the national average. Leaders and governors demonstrate, through their policies and practice, a deep commitment to the inclusion and achievement of all pupils. The range of need of pupils with SEND is very broad. Leaders plan well to ensure that all receive the help that they need to make progress. They are particularly effective in promoting pupils' progress through a balance of pastoral and academic support.
- Teachers adapt learning well for pupils with SEND and support them well in class. They use ongoing assessment to ensure that pupils at all levels of ability are able

to access the learning activity. Pupils' well-presented workbooks show the teachers' high expectations of all pupils. Leaders are building on this success to promote more securely pupils' confidence to work independently.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the school's improvement plans clearly identify how success will be measured
- teachers in key stages 1 and 2 deepen pupils' skills and knowledge in writing so that more pupils reach the higher standard
- teachers in early years improve children's knowledge of number so that more catch up to reach at least the expected level for their age.

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

Yours sincerely

Wendy Marriott  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During this inspection, I spoke with you and with senior and middle leaders. I also met with a group of governors and had a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. I made visits to all classrooms to see pupils learning and review their work. I also scrutinised a range of pupils' work in English and mathematics. I considered a range of documentary evidence, including the school's self-evaluation, plans for improvement and assessment information. I discussed safeguarding with staff and reviewed a range of documentation in relation to safeguarding. I met with a group of pupils and spoke with others in the playground and lunch hall. I gathered the views of staff through the 23 responses to the staff survey. The views of parents were considered through the 44 responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View. I also reviewed parents' views of the school by meeting with a parent, reading a letter handed to me and talking with parents at the start of the school day.