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Mr Chris Belton
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Dear Mr Belton

Short inspection of St John's CofE Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 26 February 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 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. Your committed leadership ensures that all staff contribute to making the school a happy and welcoming community. Very good relationships and an interesting curriculum are central to the school. Strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision and development are evident. Pupils are proud of their school, are well mannered and are keen to take on responsibilities. They are particularly keen to help younger pupils.

Pupils feel safe in school and act with respect for the safety of others. They trust staff to take good care of them and told me that there is no bullying in their school. Behaviour is good around school. Pupils also behave well in lessons. They work hard, concentrate and show positive attitudes to learning. The vast majority of parents regard the school very highly and say that they are very pleased with how well their children are doing at school.

You are passionate about raising pupils' aspirations, broadening their horizons and giving them new and interesting experiences. Staff plan many valuable learning experiences, including educational visits and specialist visitors. Pupils talk with great enthusiasm about the educational and residential visits they have already been on or are looking forward to. They value the Wednesday afternoon sessions, when they have the chance to develop new interests and follow different subjects.

The academic and personal development of each pupil is carefully monitored and discussions are held between staff and leaders if any pupil is not doing as well as he or she might. Any necessary additional provision is arranged to help pupils do well.

Staff training and coaching is of good quality and staff say that they value and learn from the guidance they receive. There are good procedures to help staff learn from one another and also from colleagues in the Rainbow Fellowship, which the school has usefully formed with two other local primary schools.

Because teaching and the use of assessment are good, pupils make good progress as they move through the school. Progress is best in reading. Daily phonics lessons help younger pupils tackle unfamiliar words and the school requires and enthuses pupils to read regularly. A well organised home-reading programme enables many parents to make an important contribution to their children's good progress in reading. Reading has great prominence in the school's curriculum.

Progress in writing is not quite as strong as in reading and mathematics. Leaders were asked to improve attainment in writing at the time of the last inspection. There has been some improvement made in the teaching of writing, particularly in pupils' grammar, spelling and punctuation. Presentation and standards of writing are improving overall. However, pupils' extended writing sometimes lets them down and too few pupils attain above the standards expected for their ages in writing by the time they leave the school at the age of 11. Recent improvements to provide more structure to pupils' extended writing are not yet consistently implemented throughout the school.

Governors know the school well and visit the school often. They are closely involved in key activities such as pupil progress meetings and staff meetings. The governing body continually checks its own effectiveness and makes changes when it judges these are needed. For example, individual governors are now linked to a particular aspect of the school improvement plan rather than having specific subjects to keep a close eye on. Overall, the governing body makes a good contribution to improving the school.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are comprehensive and fit for purpose and that a safeguarding culture permeates the school. Records are of high quality and are detailed and no stone is left unturned if any questions concerning pupils' safeguarding and safety arise. Staff know how to safeguard pupils and are up to date with their training. Leaders work effectively with external agencies and are prepared to challenge external agencies if they judge that pupils' best interests are not being fully served.

Pupils told me that they feel very safe and well looked after in school. Parents support this view.

Inspection findings

- Attainment by the end of Reception has not been in line with national averages over the last 2 years. Leaders have carefully reviewed the early years and identified why children have not achieved as well as in previous years.
- Children are taught well and expectations are high. They are expected to sit well and listen carefully when adults are talking to them and they are able to follow instructions. Children show very positive attitudes to school and to learning.
- The curriculum and activities in the Reception class are of good quality and children make good progress from their varied starting points. The early years curriculum provides children with many exciting and interesting learning activities both inside school and in the outdoor areas. This year, a greater proportion of pupils are on track to attain a good level of development by the end of Reception. Their writing development lags a little behind that in other areas of learning.
- Because attainment at the end of key stage 1 has been below national averages, we focused on provision in Year 2. Pupils' work and the school's accurate records show that attainment has risen this year in Year 2 due to the extensive additional support that children in this year group have received.
- The quality of teaching in Years 1 and 2 is good and, overall, pupils are progressing well in their learning. The best progress is made by those who are struggling with their learning due to the extensive additional support they receive. Attainment in writing is not as good as in reading and mathematics and too few pupils are working at greater depth in their writing. Pupils are benefiting from the daily phonics lessons they receive. Attainment in phonics has improved this year and a greater proportion of pupils are on track to attain the expected standard in the national phonics screening check.
- The school's consistent track record of good attainment and progress in key stage 2 is continuing this year and pupils achieve well overall.
- In Year 6 attainment at the expected standard, and at the higher standard, is better than last year in reading, mathematics and science. Although writing attainment is improving, pupils' writing is still not as strong as their reading and mathematics, and too few pupils are currently working above expectations for their ages in writing. Pupils' extended writing is the weakest aspect.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that staff throughout the school continue to focus on improving attainment in writing, by:

- placing greater emphasis on developing pupils' extended writing
- providing additional challenge and support for most-able writers
- ensuring that the school's recently introduced programme to provide greater structure to writing is implemented consistently throughout the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Roger Sadler
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

Before and during the inspection I analysed the performance of the school in comparison with other schools nationally. During the inspection, I evaluated the school's own records of pupils' attainment and progress. We jointly observed teaching and learning in classes. I also looked at past and current work of pupils of different abilities and compared pupils' work with the school's assessment records. A meeting was held with two members of the governing body. I analysed documents, including plans for the school's improvement and reports showing the school's view of its own performance. I looked at recent reports on the school's effectiveness. I evaluated the school's website. Safeguarding documents, policies, and records relating to pupils' personal development, behaviour, welfare and safety, and attendance were inspected.

I analysed the 19 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I also analysed the results of the 93 returns to the school's own survey of parents' views undertaken in January 2019 and spoke to 34 parents of 51 children outside the school on the day of the inspection. Pupils' views were gathered through a pre-arranged meeting and informally around the school. I gathered the views of staff through meetings with teachers and teaching assistants.