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Mr Huw Morgan
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Morgan

Short inspection of Dr South's Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 12 March 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in October 2013.

This school continues to be good.

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

You are very clear about the nature of the education you want to provide for pupils at Dr South's. The recently revised school vision, 'nurture', 'educate', and 'inspire', encapsulates this. This clarity shapes decisions about the curriculum and experiences that you and your team provide for pupils. A strong thread of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development runs throughout the school, both in the taught curriculum and in the everyday interactions enjoyed by all. Governors, staff, parents and pupils are joined with you in delivering the school's vision. Governors discharge their duties diligently and are effective partners with you in leading the school. As a result, there is a strong sense of unity and purpose.

The academy trust recognises the importance of the school's culture. Members of the trust told me, 'This is a school that epitomizes the way we work.' The school is a happy place. Everyone in it is well known, valued and included. Consequently, pupils and staff grow in skill and confidence. It is a school where people matter and thrive. Staff sought me out to tell me how supported they have been by you, and the impact this support has had on raising their confidence. As a result, they are now excited to contribute to the development of other schools in the trust and to take on increased responsibility within the school.

Pupils enjoy coming to school, which they attend regularly. They value their

education and the supportive relationships they build, both with adults and with their peers. A pupil told me, 'The teachers are very nice, they give lots of respect to us.' Pupils' enjoyment of school is further enhanced by a creative and carefully designed curriculum. This includes many opportunities to take part in musical and sporting activities representing the school. Art work of an extremely high quality adorns the walls. Art is also used well to explore equalities issues and develop religious understanding. Careful planning ensures that pupils develop the knowledge they need across the curriculum. Nevertheless, on occasion pupils' writing across the curriculum does not demonstrate the depth of skill and understanding of which they are capable. Pupils relish the opportunities offered, such as by being in a group to develop regular cooking skills and taking part in the 'forest school'. Some told me their very favourite subject was mathematics, because it is 'really fun now'. A pupil summed up why he enjoyed school so much by telling me, 'This school is where I want to be.'

Parents value the family feel of the school and the way in which their children's happiness and well-being are of central importance. Parents responding to the Ofsted survey, Parent View, repeatedly talked of how happy their children were at school, and how they 'flourish in confidence and social situations' because of the many opportunities offered to them. One parent encapsulated the views of many in saying, 'Dr South's provides a fantastic rounded education for pupils.'

You have maintained the strengths identified at the previous inspection. Children get off to a strong start to their school life in the early years. Children flourish because the environment provides them with a wide range of interesting and well-chosen experiences to develop their skills. Adults are highly skilled at asking questions to probe understanding and help develop the children's understanding of concepts. Comprehensive records of learning, which include parents' comments, contain observations which are sharply focused on what a child can do. These records are used well to plan the children's next steps. As a result, children make rapid progress across the early years and are well prepared for Year 1.

You have addressed the previous inspection issues effectively. Standards across the school are continuing to rise. A recent focus on developing mathematics has been effective. Pupils are confident and competent mathematicians. They can apply their mathematical knowledge both through solving mathematical problems and through the opportunities provided in the wider curriculum in such areas as design and cookery work.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. All the necessary recruitment checks are carried out before adults can work in school, and comprehensive safeguarding training is completed by all staff. Record-keeping is meticulous. Safeguarding processes are reviewed regularly by governors, who work effectively with school leaders to ensure that the school's systems and procedures keep pupils safe. All staff and most parents who completed the Ofsted surveys felt that pupils were

safe at school. Pupils have regular input on how to keep themselves safe, including when online.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection we looked closely together at several specific aspects of the school's work, including the teaching of phonics. Leaders have tackled effectively the historical decline in phonics outcomes seen in the Year 1 national phonics screening check. There is now a consistent and systematic approach to the teaching of phonics. During the inspection pupils were keenly learning phonemes (the smallest units of sound) and applying them well to their reading. Staff are confident in delivering sessions which are accurately matched to pupils' needs. As a result, pupils are making good progress from their starting points.
- We also looked at how effectively middle leaders develop their subjects across the school. Staff value the systems and bespoke professional development that are in place to help them to lead their subjects well. They work effectively as individuals and in teams to ensure good subject development. Part of this is ensuring that other areas of focus, such as cookery and forest skills, reinforce and further extend pupils' subject skills. Pupils' books demonstrate broad experience and progression across a wide range of subjects.
- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported across the school. The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) identifies pupils with SEND carefully. She works closely with pupils, parents and staff to ensure that pupils' needs are understood and that support is underpinned by careful planning. Teaching assistants' support for pupils with SEND is extensive and well informed. As a result, pupils with SEND thrive and make good progress from their starting points.
- We looked at the development of pupils' writing across the school. The English leader has been effective in raising standards in writing. Across the school pupils write for a range of purposes, using appropriate phraseology and rich vocabulary.
- Careful revision of planning has ensured that the pupils' strengths in reading are used well to enhance their writing. Systematic teaching leads to pupils applying their spelling, punctuation and grammatical skills well. While the content of work is of high quality, occasionally this is hidden by careless presentation, typically through inconsistently applied handwriting skills.
- Pupils write widely across the curriculum and for a range of purposes. However, sometimes this writing does not record or develop subject-specific skills well, for example in forming scientific conclusions or evaluating historical sources. As a result, some pupils, particularly the most able, do not demonstrate or develop their knowledge and understanding fully in their recorded work.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils' handwriting skills are further developed and consistently applied
- pupils, particularly the most able, develop their subject-specific writing skills well across the curriculum.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, 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

Deborah Gordon
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, we met regularly together. I also met with members of the governing body and the academy trust, and with staff. I reviewed documentation, including information about pupils' achievement, the school improvement plan, and safeguarding checks, policies and procedures. Together, we visited classes across the school. In lessons, I observed pupils' learning, looked at their books, and spoke to pupils about their work. I had a meeting with pupils to gather their views of the school. I took into account the views of parents I met on the playground, and I also considered 49 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 23 free-text responses. I also analysed nine responses to the Ofsted staff survey.