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Mr Matthew Downes  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Downes

### **Short inspection of St John's CofE Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 26 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 second short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in April 2011.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. You, school leaders and governors have met the challenges presented by staff changes. There is strong teamwork among the staff. They share ideas with each other and with members of staff from other schools. You, the staff and governors work effectively together towards achieving the school's aims.

You and your staff know the pupils well and establish positive relationships with them. The pupils I spoke to during my visit told me that they like their small school community because they know everyone. They spoke keenly about their learning and their teachers. They said that they like receiving the school's awards for good achievement and attendance. They wear their badges for good behaviour with pride. Parents appreciate the school's work. Their views are typified by this parental comment: 'The family feel is something the school should be proud of. The children get some excellent chances within the school and via trips.'

The school is a welcoming place where pupils' personal and academic achievements are valued. The 'Believe, Endeavour, Succeed Together' code helps pupils to see the importance of effort and cooperation. The curriculum is interesting and enhanced by a broad range of extra activities. You make the most of the limited accommodation in the school building and nurture links with other schools, for example to meet the requirements of the physical education curriculum. You have made improvements to the early years outdoors area to enhance children's learning. You have rightly identified ways to widen the personal and social curriculum to further extend pupils' personal development and well-being.

Since the previous inspection, you have established effective ways to track pupils' progress, including the progress made by children in the early years. The information is discussed regularly with staff to identify quickly pupils in danger of falling behind and those who need extra support. You ensure that teachers' assessments are accurate, by comparison with other schools and verification by the local authority.

One of your main priorities is to improve pupils' progress in writing. When we visited classrooms together, I saw pupils engaged in a variety of writing activities. Staff used a range of approaches to stimulate pupils' interest and to develop pupils' speaking, listening and thinking skills before they began to write. When pupils showed me work in their books, I saw good examples of writing for various purposes across a range of subjects, including science, history and geography.

You and your subject leaders are raising the profile of reading to increase pupils' enjoyment and to enable them to reach higher standards. In mathematics, teachers set tasks which enable pupils to use what they have learned to solve problems and carry out investigations. These approaches, together with the improved teaching of writing, are leading to more pupils working at greater depth in these subjects than previously. However, although there have been improvements, teachers' expectations of the most able are still not as high as they could be.

While leaders ensure that lower-ability pupils receive extra help to build their basic skills, not enough attention is paid to checking that the teaching of phonics is consistently effective. The standards reached by key stage 1 pupils vary from year to year. Although showing signs of improvement, they are below the national average.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You, senior leaders and governors ensure that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Staff receive regular training so they know how to raise any concerns they may have over pupils' welfare.

You maintain effective systems to vet all adults who work with pupils. You keep confidential records on child protection issues and work effectively with external agencies and families to address any concerns that may arise.

The pupils I spoke to unanimously agreed that they feel safe at school and parents who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, agree with them. Pupils know about the different forms that bullying may take, including when using technology, because of the guidance on anti-bullying they receive from the school. Pupils said that bullying is not an issue in their school but, if it does occur, they expressed confidence in staff to help them to resolve any worries they may have.

You and governors carry out regular checks to limit any risk to pupils. You enable pupils to share their views and you promote strong values, including those of respect and tolerance. External visitors, such as representatives of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, and Drug Abuse Resistance Education, provide pupils with further advice on how to keep themselves safe from potential risks.

## Inspection findings

- Leaders' actions are resulting in improved progress in pupils' writing throughout the school. Pupils are encouraged to write widely about interesting subjects. The systematic development of skills in grammar and punctuation is helping pupils to produce well-structured writing.
- In key stage 1, extra adult support is helping pupils to achieve well. Pupils currently in Year 2 are making strong progress from starting points which were lower than is usually seen in the school when they entered key stage 1.
- When teaching phonics, teachers provide tasks that are suitably matched to pupils' abilities. The school's information shows an improvement from previous years in the proportion of Year 1 pupils on track to reach the expected standard. However, leaders lack a clear overview of whether the teaching of phonics is ensuring that pupils achieve as well as they can.
- Leaders' analysis of pupils' previous performance has led to an evaluation of the curriculum and improvements in the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics. More pupils than previously in key stage 1 and key stage 2 are reaching higher standards in these subjects because teachers are increasingly challenging pupils to work at greater depth. However, some tasks given to pupils indicate that teachers do not always expect enough, particularly from the most able pupils.
- Leaders check frequently the progress made by individual pupils, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Those identified as needing extra help receive skilful adult support to increase their progress.
- Leaders' efforts to improve attendance and reduce frequent absence are paying off, which in turn is having a positive effect on pupils' achievement overall.

## Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the teaching of phonics continues to increase the proportion of pupils who reach the expected standard in Year 1
- teachers have consistently high expectations and provide tasks which challenge pupils to deepen their understanding in reading, writing and mathematics, especially the most able.

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

Vivienne McTiffen  
**Ofsted Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with you to discuss the school's improvement plans and information about pupils' progress. We visited all classes together to observe the teaching of literacy, including phonics. I met with the leader of English and we looked at examples of writing in pupils' books. I also looked at a sample of mathematics books. I met the chair of the governing body and two other governors. I spoke to pupils during lessons about their work. I also met with a group of pupils and they showed me their writing in history, geography, science and religious education. I listened to pupils read and I observed activities at lunchtime. I considered the 22 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the written comments submitted by parents. I also looked at a recent survey for parents carried out by the school. I took account of the three responses to the questionnaire completed by staff. I scrutinised the single central record of recruitment checks, looked at documentation relating to safeguarding and discussed the school's safeguarding procedures with you and members of staff. We also discussed attendance.