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18 February 2020

Mrs Helen Lever  
Headteacher  
St John's Church of England Primary Academy  
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Clifton  
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West Yorkshire  
HD6 4HP

Dear Mrs Lever

### **Subject inspection of St John's Church of England Primary Academy**

Following my visit to your school on 5 February 2020, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. The findings do not change the overall effectiveness judgement of outstanding from the last section 5 inspection.

This inspection was conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and in accordance with Ofsted's published procedures for a no formal designation inspection of schools. The inspection was carried out to enable Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to better understand the quality of education in specific subjects provided by outstanding primary schools.

### **Main findings**

You and your vice principal, who leads on curriculum development, have established a structured approach to revising the curriculum. Your current curriculum review draws on educational research about how pupils learn and remember important knowledge. You have set up a clear timetable to revise your curriculum plans. School leaders have already developed new plans in some curriculum areas and you have recently turned your attention to revising and rolling out your geography curriculum plans. Your geography subject leader and your vice principal have already revised much of the curriculum planning. This planning aims to at least cover the national curriculum and link effectively to the school's locality. You are also considering ways to assess pupils' geographical knowledge which are manageable

for your staff. You have timetabled geography teaching in 'blocks of time'. At present, you are considering if this approach leaves too long a 'learning gap' over time. You want to be sure that this does not impact negatively on how pupils retain important knowledge. Some of your work to develop your geography planning and assessment is relatively new and needs further refinement.

Consideration of your planning shows that leaders have aimed to create well-sequenced plans which cover the requirements set out in the national curriculum. You are also considering how Reception children's learning about understanding the world links to your geography planning. However, when we reviewed planning, some of the national curriculum content was not explicitly identified. Planning around 'place knowledge' is not specific enough in relation to which contrasting 'small areas' or 'regions' are to be studied in key stage 1 and key stage 2 respectively. You have very recently developed a more detailed plan to sequence how map work should be taught across school. You are just about to implement this planning in school. This planning aims to help teachers be clearer about how geographical skills and fieldwork develop sequentially in different year groups. Your understanding of the geography curriculum as a 'progression model' is helping you consider suitable ways to assess how to check pupils' learning in ways which are not burdensome for staff.

Generally, teachers use a range of appropriate activities and resources to develop pupils' geographical knowledge and skills. In the main, this work matched your geography planning for what you want pupils to know. Teachers largely understand where the lessons taught fit into the planned sequence of learning. They have a broad understanding of pupils' prior learning and the planned end points following a sequence of lessons. This is because teachers use ongoing assessments or end of topic assessments to check that pupils are gaining the planned knowledge. However, sometimes, teachers do not match the resources and the activities to the intended geographical learning well. This is most clearly seen in the teaching of map skills and the work that has been completed by pupils in relation to physical features such as rivers and volcanoes.

Your teachers are providing pupils with diverse ways to record their learning in geography, including the use of tablet technology. This supports all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), to develop their geographical knowledge and skills. Furthermore, teaching assistant support ensures that pupils with SEND are accessing the planned geography curriculum effectively. By Year 6, pupils are confidently using tablet technology to complete research into geographical questions and develop their learning independently.

You, your vice principal and governors are successfully checking how well the revised curriculum is being rolled out, including in geography. You also work with another headteacher to provide an external view of the impact of improvements. The geography subject leader is attending appropriate training to further develop her leadership expertise. Support from the vice principal ensures that there is a

consistent approach to curriculum development across subjects, including in geography. Senior leaders are helping the geography subject leader to develop her monitoring of the quality of geographical education. You have plans in place to involve the geography subject leader more with monitoring geography curriculum implementation. This will increase your capacity for checking the impact of the actions you are taking to improve your geography curriculum.

My discussions with pupils and lesson visits show that your pupils are enthusiastic about their learning in geography. From early years to Year 6, there is evidence that pupils are successfully developing their geographical knowledge. Reception children show a secure understanding about hot and cold countries. They are very knowledgeable about animals found in the Antarctic. This learning provides children with a good platform to build on their understanding of the world in readiness for the geography curriculum in Year 1. Year 3 pupils demonstrate that they have retained important geographical knowledge about the United Kingdom which they had learned in key stage 1. These pupils are developing a growing knowledge base about rivers which is the current focus of their physical and human geography. Year 6 pupils make effective links with their prior learning from previous year groups when explaining their work on rainforests. Your focus on developing pupils' knowledge of key geographical vocabulary is paying dividends. For example, Year 6 pupils can explain important concepts such as 'sustainability' and 'carbon footprint', and how these link to their current learning.

## **Evidence**

I met with you and your vice principal, who has overall responsibility for the curriculum. I met with your humanities leaders, including the subject leaders for geography and history. During this second meeting, I reviewed your geography curriculum plans. Together, we visited lessons in the early years, key stage 1 and key stage 2. I spoke to two groups of pupils to discuss their learning in geography lessons. I evaluated a selection of pupils' geography work in books and samples of Reception children's learning. Finally, I met with teachers to discuss the lesson visits and their approaches to teaching geography.

## **Context**

St John's Church of England Primary Academy has 211 pupils on roll. The vast majority of pupils are white British. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is much lower than the national average. The proportions of pupils with SEND and those pupils with education, health and care plans are higher than the national averages. Pupil numbers are very stable; few pupils move in and out of the school. Similarly, the teaching staff is stable over time and there has been little turnover of staff. The school is an academy but is not part of a multi-academy trust.

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

Yours sincerely

Michael Reeves  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**