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Mrs Diana Higton
Headteacher
St John's CofE (C) Primary School
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Dear Mrs Higton

Short inspection of St John's CofE (C) Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 28 November 2017, 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 November 2012.

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 created a school where pupils feel valued and very well supported. One parent commented, 'The headteacher is a shining light.' You lead staff with enthusiasm and encourage senior leaders, staff and governors to work together to identify what needs to be done to help all pupils achieve well. This collaborative approach is contributing to the continuing improvements in teaching and pupils' learning.

Pupils are polite and welcoming. They treat each other and adults with respect and have a strong work ethic. Pupils enjoy taking on responsibilities in the school. The science ambassadors, for example, told me how much they appreciate working with staff to plan activities for the science club. The vast majority of parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, said that they would recommend the school to others. 'A lovely school where every child is known to the staff' and 'All my children have done well at St John's' were just some of the comments made by parents during the inspection.

In 2016, not all the pupils in Year 6 made the progress of which they were capable in writing and mathematics. In response to this, senior leaders and staff took decisive action to improve the teaching of writing and mathematics. Inspection evidence confirms that the school is now back on track and outcomes for pupils are improving securely. The proportions of Year 6 pupils making the progress they

should and making greater progress than pupils nationally increased markedly between 2016 and 2017.

Following the previous inspection, leaders were asked to ensure that boys reach the same high standard in writing as they do in reading. Teachers in all year groups responded by planning writing activities which captured the interest of boys and girls. Despite these changes, a lower proportion of Year 6 boys reached the expected standard in writing than in reading in 2017. You worked with other leaders to identify why this was the case. You found that weaknesses in spelling and vocabulary prevented a few boys from reaching higher standards in writing. My visits to lessons, a review of pupils' work and your latest achievement information show that staff are taking effective action to tackle these weaknesses. The difference between boys' attainment in reading and in writing is diminishing quickly. Boys and girls spell accurately and use exciting vocabulary when they write. In Year 6, for instance, pupils were mesmerised as they wrote the start to their story. 'The failing battery of his torch cast an eerie glow... he was not alone,' wrote one pupil.

You were also asked to increase the proportion of outstanding teaching at the time of the last inspection. Since 2012, there have been some changes in staffing. Three out of the seven teachers are new to the school. Teachers and teaching assistants have benefited from being part of a learning community with six other local schools. This learning community has given staff the chance to attend suitable training events and to share and observe effective practice. This external support, alongside the training that you and other senior leaders provide, is helping teachers to ensure that pupils in the school make at least good progress over time.

You, other senior leaders and governors recognise that pupils in some classes do not have sufficient chances to develop their writing stamina. You also acknowledge that a few staff miss the opportunity to deepen pupils' mathematical understanding through reasoning and problem-solving activities. This is preventing some pupils, and especially the most able pupils, from reaching even higher standards. You agree that there is still work to do to ensure that pupils write neatly and present their work well across different subjects.

Safeguarding is effective.

You, senior leaders and governors ensure that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Teachers, teaching assistants, midday supervisors and governors are fully aware of their safeguarding responsibilities. Through regular training, you make sure that staff and governors remain up to date with their knowledge of safeguarding. Senior leaders and governors regularly check the school site to ensure that it is secure and check the suitability of staff and volunteers before they come to work in the school.

Staff keep a watchful eye on pupils and respond to concerns about individual pupils quickly. The parents who spoke with me confirmed that the school is a safe place. They commended the care shown by staff towards their children. A few parents who responded to the Ofsted online questionnaire raised concerns about the way

staff manage pupils' behaviour. School records and my discussions with pupils confirm that as soon as any incidents of misbehaviour or bullying are brought to the attention of staff they are dealt with appropriately.

Pupils know how to stay safe in different situations. This includes staying safe online and managing risks outside of school. Pupils play a crucial role in strengthening the school's safeguarding practice. Each year, the pupils who are on the school council devise a safety questionnaire for their classmates. Staff review pupils' comments and take suitable action in response to any issues raised. For example, staff arranged for pupils to receive additional guidance on road safety when some pupils raised concerns about crossing the road.

Inspection findings

- You, other senior leaders and staff are constantly striving to secure the best outcomes for pupils. Members of the governing body play a pivotal role in school improvement. They ask astute questions to check the impact of leaders' actions on pupils' progress. Senior leaders and governors are fully aware that while pupils' achievement improved overall in 2017, there were some differences between the achievement of different groups of pupils. For instance, a lower proportion of boys in Year 2 achieved greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics than girls. The actions that you and the staff are taking to eradicate the differences between the achievement of different groups are appropriate.
- The teaching of phonics is strong. Pupils learn to use their knowledge of the sounds that letters make to read fluently. Extra support for pupils in Years 1 and 2 is helping more boys in these year groups to reach higher standards in reading than in the past.
- By the time pupils are in Year 6, they have gained a secure understanding of numbers, fractions, decimals and percentages. An increased focus on developing pupils' reasoning and problem-solving skills is helping to deepen pupils' understanding of different mathematical concepts. However, there are occasions when a few teachers do not provide sufficiently challenging activities for the pupils who are ready to move on in their learning. This prevents some pupils, and especially the most able, from making even stronger progress in mathematics.
- The teachers with responsibilities for subjects and aspects of the school's work regularly check pupils' work and the quality of teaching. Although these leaders provide individual teachers with valuable advice for raising pupils' achievement, they do not make sure that all staff act on this advice. This is resulting in some variation in the quality of teaching between classes. For example, there is still work to be done to ensure that pupils, and especially the most able, have the chance to practise and extend their writing skills. Similarly, further work is required to ensure that pupils write legibly in different subjects.
- There is a clear strategy in place for meeting the learning needs of the small number of disadvantaged pupils. Senior leaders make sure that these pupils receive appropriate and timely support. Members of the governing body meet with leaders to check that the additional funding for these pupils is used well.

Your latest achievement information shows that disadvantaged pupils in the school are making at least good progress.

- The wider curriculum is well planned and makes a highly effective contribution to pupils' learning. Science is particularly well taught. Pupils have the chance to develop their scientific knowledge, make predictions, plan investigations and draw conclusions. Pupils enjoy keeping fit, with many taking part in a range of sporting activities in school, and at a local and national level. Pupils of all ages value the opportunity to learn how to play a musical instrument. During the inspection, a group of pupils played the clarinet with confidence and proficiency.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- all teachers implement consistently the actions agreed following the monitoring of teaching
- pupils, and especially the most able, have sufficient opportunities to develop their stamina in writing and their reasoning and problem-solving skills in mathematics
- all teachers make sure that pupils present their work neatly in different subjects.

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

Yours sincerely

Usha Devi
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, the deputy headteacher and another senior leader. I also met with the chair of the governing body and three other governors. I spoke with some parents at the start of the school day. I considered 22 responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, and the accompanying free-text comments. Staff's and pupils' responses to Ofsted's online questionnaires were also considered. Together, we visited lessons to observe pupils' learning, to speak to pupils and to look at examples of their work. I looked at a range of documentation including your evaluation of the school's effectiveness, the school improvement plan, minutes of the governing body's meetings and information relating to keeping pupils safe.