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Mrs Claire Mirams
Headteacher
St John's Church of England Primary School
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Dear Mrs Mirams

Short inspection of St John's Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 14 September 2016, 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 2010.

This school continues to be good.

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

Since your appointment in September 2015 you have sustained the best aspects of the school, especially the good outcomes, caring ethos and community spirit. You have initiated new approaches and systems, successfully addressing the demands of the new national curriculum and the way in which pupils are assessed. You are well supported by the governing body and staff. They share your vision and determination to make St John's an outstanding school.

Much has been achieved in the last year to ensure that the school is still good and that pupils continue to achieve well. The two assistant headteachers take a greater role in monitoring and evaluating the work of staff and pupils. They use the results of their activities, such as monitoring teaching and looking at pupils' work, to be sure that pupils are getting a good education in all subjects. As a result, you are able to focus relentlessly on leading the development of teaching. Such a focus on coaching and supporting staff has been particularly helpful in developing the skills of staff with new responsibilities.

Since the previous inspection the quality of pupils' writing has much improved. Teachers have provided better guidance and support and pupils are clear about what is expected of them. This means that pupils know what they need to do to improve their work and learn from their mistakes.

The on-site Nursery, previously judged as good by Ofsted in 2014, became part of the school on 1 September 2016. Careful planning by the governing body and senior leaders made the change in ownership happen smoothly. Under the strong leadership of the school, the staff from the early years team and the Nursery are working closely together to develop teaching and to refine the way children's progress is monitored and recorded.

Safeguarding is effective.

The school's procedures to keep pupils safe are rigorous and robust.

- The school's policies are informative, helpful, written to the latest statutory requirements and follow the most up-to-date guidance. The safeguarding policy is an easy-to-read, yet comprehensive document. Together with the helpful information on the school's website, it provides contact details and links to where further information or help can be found.
- School leaders are thorough and rigorous in applying the school's policies and processes to keep pupils safe.
- All staff are well trained in safeguarding and are regularly kept up to date with the latest government guidelines. They know what the potential signs of abuse might be, such as for female genital mutilation, and what actions they need to take.
- You, as the safeguarding leader, work resolutely with external agencies so that where pupils are vulnerable to exploitation, radicalisation or harm they are kept safe.
- Documents and records are detailed, clearly recorded and appropriately stored and shared. When pupils leave the school, for example, you keep careful records of where they have moved to.
- Regular checks have been made by the nominated governor to confirm that the school's policies are effective and properly implemented.
- Vetting procedures for new staff are applied rigorously.
- The security of the school has been updated to the latest standards. For example, effective use is made of current technology to restrict inappropriate access to the school grounds and premises.

- The school leaders are aware of the risks to pupils through social media and the use of modern technology. The school's systems are secure and pupils know how to keep themselves safe when online and when using social media. We discussed that parents might benefit from having more information on how they can check their systems at home and know the full implications of internet connections, particularly through online gaming consoles.

Inspection findings

- Closer working relationships with other local schools have helped school leaders to check the accuracy of assessments and confirm the progress that pupils make. They have also given teachers more external contacts, which is developing and extending their subject knowledge and expertise.
- All staff are given high-quality training to support their teaching. In lessons and clubs, teachers use what they have learned so that pupils in all year groups are supported to make good progress across a wide range of subjects. For example, pupils develop good practical skills through their construction work in design and technology, experiments in science and through cooking.
- Teachers prepare good-quality displays to support pupils' learning and celebrate their successes. Work from artistic and creative activities are all around the school buildings. There is a wide range of popular clubs and activities including physical activities, French, sewing, ukulele, mindfulness, fun mathematics and homework clubs.
- Children in the early years get off to a cracking start. Talented and well-trained staff make sure that children leave the Reception Year with levels of development higher than those seen nationally. Staff in Year 1 build on this so that, at the end of Year 1, a much higher proportion of pupils than nationally meet the expected standard in the phonics screening check.
- Although improving, pupils' writing by the end of Year 2 is typically not as strong as their reading and mathematical development. Changes to the way that writing is taught throughout the school are raising standards. This is clearly demonstrated in pupils' books in all years and classes. However, just occasionally teachers do not write perfectly formed letters as examples of handwriting for pupils to copy.
- Since the previous inspection the quality of teaching has not always been consistently good. As a result, some of the older pupils have not achieved as well as they could. Since your appointment last year, your strong focus on leading teaching has ensured that any weaknesses in teaching have been swiftly dealt with. For example, the changes to the way mathematics is taught are enabling pupils to acquire the knowledge and understanding expected for their age. Leaders are aware that more needs to be embedded in day-to-day teaching for pupils to have a deeper knowledge and mastery of mathematical understanding. However, these aspects are being developed well.

- Currently, the most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, are making good progress throughout the school in a wide range of subjects. Teachers plan work which challenges these pupils to deepen their knowledge and understanding. However, at times the tasks set for them are not challenging enough. Consequently, over time, this reduces their opportunities to master more difficult work.
- Although few in number per year group, those pupils who struggle with their learning, including some who are disadvantaged, do not always make fast enough progress to reach age-related expectations. The appointment of a senior leader to champion this group of pupils alongside your push to improve teaching is already helping these pupils to make better progress. You, and the governing body, have used the most recent research to be assured that the pupil premium funding is now being used in the most effective way to improve these pupils' achievement. Governors are effectively monitoring the steady improvements that are being made as a result of the planned actions you have taken.
- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress from their starting points. Regular one-to-one support from the occupational and speech and language therapists helps pupils to improve. Specialist training for school staff has meant that they can continue to provide support for the pupils in the absence of the specialists. This training of school staff also helps other pupils who are not identified as needing specialist support but who also struggle with their communication or coordination skills.
- Staff are excellent role models for pupils. They help create a caring and considerate community. This is a friendly and happy school in which to work and play. Pupils said, and school records show, that bullying is rare and is dealt with swiftly if it occurs. Differences are respected and celebrated. The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strong feature of the school's provision and pupils are prepared well for life in modern Britain. However, you are looking at ways for pupils to have more first-hand experiences beyond the local area to further their knowledge and understanding of different communities.
- The school council, introduced last year, is enjoying the opportunity to 'make a difference' and bring about change. Members of the council are pleased that they can represent their classmates' views. You have listened to them and, when appropriate, you have made changes in response to their comments, for example, allowing girls to wear trousers.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- those who struggle with their learning, especially those who are disadvantaged, make even better progress
- the most able pupils tackle more demanding work
- the work already started to improve the standards that pupils reach in mathematics is continued.

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

Yours sincerely

Steffi Penny
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you, other leaders and members of the governing body. I spoke with pupils during lessons and met members of the school council. I scrutinised the quality of pupils' work. I took account of the 30 responses to a staff survey and 32 responses by parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.

I considered a wide range of documentary evidence including records relating to safeguarding, the quality of teaching, the curriculum, assessment information and the school's analysis of attendance, behaviour and leavers' destinations.

The key lines of enquiry tested on the short inspection day were:

- the impact of leadership to resolve the predecessor school's areas for improvement
- the achievement of the most able, most-able disadvantaged and least-able disadvantaged pupils in all year groups, across a wide range of subjects
- the quality and impact of the support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities
- the effectiveness of the preparations made by the governing body for the changes to the school this September
- to review the improvements in the standards in pupils' writing, and the work that the school is undertaking to improve the quality of mathematics provision
- the impact of the school's policies, procedures and training of staff to ensure that pupils are kept safe and know how to keep themselves safe.