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Mrs Juliette Moxham
Headteacher
St John's Church of England Primary School
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Dear Mrs Moxham

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

Following my visit to the school on 7 February 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 June 2012.

This school continues to be good.

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

Leaders know the school and its pupils extremely well. As leaders, you are acutely aware of the areas for improvement, including attendance for disadvantaged pupils and pupils achieving greater depth in their writing and mathematics at key stage 1. You have set about tackling these areas swiftly and with gusto. Governors are also keenly aware of what needs to improve in the school. They provide the necessary balance of challenge and support to ensure that leaders stay focused on the key issues. Governors' challenge is informed by published and internal performance information, as well as information governors have gathered themselves. Consequently, they know the right questions to ask and can evaluate the impact of actions taken to improve outcomes for pupils to good effect.

Your strong leadership has enabled staff to improve the quality of their teaching and raise achievement for pupils. Indeed, governors describe you as a leader who is 'full of passion to ensure that pupils receive the best'. The previous inspection report highlighted the need to improve teachers' use of assessment. In light of the changes to assessment nationally, leaders are working tirelessly to ensure that assessment remains 'fit for purpose'. Teachers carefully follow the school's assessment policy. Consequently, pupils are typically making good progress in different subjects as they move through the school.

Pupils are very proud of their school. They describe how they are well supported by staff in both their learning and emotional needs. They comment, 'We are one big happy family and look after each other.'

Parents spoken to or who submitted comments via the online inspection questionnaire, including text messages, are overwhelmingly positive about the quality of education and care their children receive. There were many complimentary comments made by parents. Typical comments described how 'we couldn't get a better school anywhere else' and being 'blown away with the school; they never lose sight of the individual child.'

At the beginning of the inspection, we agreed the key lines of enquiry to be considered during the day. To ascertain that the school remained good, one key line of enquiry was establishing the effectiveness of actions taken to raise achievement for the most able, including the most able disadvantaged, at key stage 1. The second key line of enquiry was looking at the effectiveness of phonics teaching to support reading and writing. A further key line of enquiry was to consider how subject leaders contribute to improving pupils' progress. Under the final key line of enquiry, we were to explore how the school ensures that pupils are safe and the actions taken to ensure that disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities attend school regularly. These key lines of enquiry are considered below in the 'safeguarding' paragraphs and the 'Inspection findings'.

Safeguarding is effective.

School leaders, including governors, consider the safeguarding of pupils to be integral to the work of the school. A strong culture of safety and security pervades the school, with a shared understanding of the need to protect pupils from all possible risks. Staff, regardless of their role, keep a watchful eye on every pupil, especially those whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Parents speak positively about the improvements you have made, and continue to make, to ensure that the site is safe and secure. They are confident that their children are kept safe. The school's policies and procedures take account of the latest statutory guidelines, follow the most recent national guidance and are resolutely followed by staff. Staff are well trained in all aspects of safeguarding, which enables them to identify concerns quickly and take rapid action with confidence.

Leaders and governors fully understand the importance of recruiting safely. All staff are carefully checked prior to starting employment to ensure their suitability to work with pupils. Leaders carry out regular health and safety checks to make sure that the school is safe. For example, regular checks are carried out on outside play equipment to minimise the risk to pupils. Leaders carefully evaluate the risk of any activity, such as Year 6 pupils' regular use of the local park for recreation and physical exercise. Pupils are confident that they can share any concerns or worries they may have with a member of staff. They describe how they are 'very well looked after'. Pupils describe how incidents of bullying are extremely rare and they are confident that any acts of unkindness are swiftly resolved by staff. Both pupils

and parents welcome the guidance they are given on personal safety. Consequently, pupils are fully aware of potential risks, such as passing on personal information when using the internet.

All safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose, and records are detailed and of high quality.

Inspection findings

- Pupils in key stage 1 typically make strong progress over time in reading, writing and mathematics. This is because teaching is effective and sets learning activities that excite and motivate pupils.
- Leaders carefully monitor the achievement of all groups of pupils. Through this careful analysis, they have accurately identified that the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, could make stronger progress, especially in achieving greater depth in writing and mathematics.
- Leaders have taken swift action for improvement, such as bespoke interventions to develop pupils' writing skills. Current progress information shows that these pupils are achieving well. Nevertheless, leaders are not complacent and are regularly checking that actions put in place enable these pupils to make the very best progress.
- At the time of the previous inspection, the school was asked to develop the role of middle leaders in checking the quality of teaching and learning to ensure their stronger contribution to improving pupils' achievement. These leaders have a very clear and detailed knowledge of the progress pupils make in the subjects they lead. They share a passion and determination for continual school improvement. They contribute widely to supporting staff in driving forward improvements through the sharing of good practice and the delivery of high-quality training.
- The school was hugely disappointed in the significant dip in the number of pupils who achieved the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check in 2016, having been significantly above the national average in recent years. Leaders immediately began a detailed analysis to unpick where and why pupils had been unsuccessful. Rapid action has been taken to ensure that this dip is not repeated. Teachers are checking whether activities precisely meet pupils' needs, especially for those pupils in Year 2. Current information shows that pupils are making good progress in phonics and are on track to achieve at least the expected standard in the 2017 phonics screening check. Reading is given a high profile in the school. Younger pupils read to me with enthusiasm, demonstrating their confidence in tackling unknown words and their understanding of the text. They demonstrated a love of reading in their eagerness to talk about favoured authors and types of books.
- Attendance for pupils overall is improving and is above the national average. However, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special

educational needs and/or disabilities, while improving, is not doing so rapidly enough and remains below the national average. Leaders, including governors, are keenly aware that attendance is not good enough for these pupils.

- Improving attendance has been identified as a high priority by leaders. The school works closely and promptly with parents and outside agencies when pupils are absent from school, particularly those pupils with persistent absence. For example, phone calls are made to parents when staff are first alerted to absence. Leaders explained that, in certain circumstances, arrangements are made to collect pupils from their homes to ensure that they attend school regularly.
- There have been no exclusions since 2015. This is because staff carefully manage behaviour and pupils have a clear understanding of what is expected of them.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the focus on improving the attendance of those pupils who are disadvantaged or have special educational needs and/or disabilities continues and rapidly reduces the number of unauthorised absences
- the most able pupils in key stage 1, including the most able disadvantaged, consistently reach the highest levels of achievement in writing and mathematics.

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

Yours sincerely

Jen Southall
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, your deputy headteacher and subject leaders. We talked about the improvements which have been made since the last inspection. Together, we visited phonics lessons and carried out a 'learning walk' through classes in key stage 1 and Year 6, where I heard some pupils read. I also held discussions with seven governors, including the chair of the governing body, and talked informally to pupils and heard some read. I met with an officer from the local authority.

A wide range of documentation was looked at, including the school's evaluation of its own performance and information relating to pupils' current achievement and progress. I also checked the effectiveness of the school's safeguarding arrangements and attendance information.

I spoke to parents at the start of the day and also took into account the 31 responses to the online survey 'Parent View' and considered additional comments received from parents. I took into account 17 responses to the staff survey and 30 responses from pupils.