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Mr Keith Atkins
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Atkins

Short inspection of St Andrew's Church School

Following my visit to the school on 27 November 2018, 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 May 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. You have only been in post since September. There have been significant changes to leadership since the previous inspection. The current deputy headteacher assumed the leadership of the school in an interim role on a few occasions and was last year supported in leading the school by the key stage 1 leader. During this period of change the school's effectiveness in promoting good teaching and learning has continued to be strengthened. Standards have risen at the end of early years and key stage 1. The progress that pupils made across key stage 2 last year was above average in reading and mathematics. The teaching of reading is a particular strength of the school.

Pupils are very positive about what the school offers them. Those spoken to could explain how they were doing their part to 'aim high, show respect and make a difference'. Pupils and their parents value the enrichment of the curriculum through frequent highlights which broaden the topics studied. For example, older pupils cook and taste wartime food as part of their Second World War topic. A parent typically expressed confidence in the school saying: 'This school has been everything we have wanted from a school. The teachers are amazing. We couldn't ask for more.'

The handover of the leadership of the school has been managed effectively to ensure that the impetus of improvement is not lost. Skilled and experienced governors, and close working with multi-academy trust advisers, have supported this process. You and your team of leaders have identified relevant priorities for the

next stage of the school's development. You have used assessment information effectively to target the further development of mathematics.

At the previous inspection leaders were advised to raise standards in writing. There has been considerable development of the teaching of writing. In 2018, the standards pupils reached at the end of key stage 1 were above national average at both the expected and at the higher standards. Pupils' progress across key stage 2 was average and therefore not as strong as their progress in reading and mathematics. Boys' progress in writing has been weaker than that of girls for the past two years. The achievement of boys is improving, but boys' writing remains as an area of development for the school.

Safeguarding is effective.

Staff are vigilant for pupils' safety and welfare. A group of leaders is trained to the higher level in safeguarding, enabling them to respond quickly to concerns raised. Their teamwork has supported the school's safeguarding practice during the changes in leadership. Leaders work closely with a number of agencies to secure support for pupils. School leaders persist in referring concerns if they feel that pupils continue to be at risk. All records of actions taken in respect of safeguarding are recorded meticulously.

Governors maintain their effective oversight of safeguarding through frequent meetings with leaders and through their own monitoring. For example, they scrutinise the school's records of checks made on adults who work with pupils. Governors regularly check to ensure that all procedures and policies are up to date and effective.

Pupils feel safe in school. They are realistic that on rare occasions pupils may treat others unkindly. However, they understand how to make their concerns known and say they would confide in any member of staff because they have, as a pupil expressed it, 'earned our trust'. Pupils value the guidance they are given on how to keep themselves safe, for example through understanding the risks of the internet. Overwhelmingly, parents believe that their children are safe and well looked after. A very small number of parents felt that their concerns were not sufficiently recognised. Inspection evidence showed that concerns are addressed, but at times they are not recorded well enough to help leaders check the effectiveness of the actions taken.

Inspection findings

- Children get off to a good start with their writing in the Reception class. However, while rising over time, the proportion of children attaining the early learning goal in writing has been lower than attainment in other areas of the curriculum. Staff in the Reception class promote children's interest in writing effectively. During the inspection, boys and girls were seen to choose writing as part of their independent learning. Children acquire phonic skills early and use these to write familiar words and organise their ideas into simple stories.

However, although staff place an emphasis on children learning to form letters correctly, a proportion of boys struggle to gain the pencil control to do this. For some boys this barrier to writing continues into Year 1 and limits their overall achievement.

- Year 2 pupils are confident writers and most develop their writing, including their creative stories, using joined handwriting and well-formed sentences. Improved standards in phonic knowledge are helping pupils to spell a wider range of vocabulary accurately. All teachers give pupils good guidance on what to include in their writing in order to be successful. Teachers in Years 5 and 6 develop pupils' ability to express their ideas succinctly and accurately. This was seen in the Year 5 diary entries written as if pupils were Second World War evacuees. Pupils' writing showed maturity and their deepening skills. Leaders are continuing to develop the teaching of writing to ensure that all pupils, particularly boys, build on their good key stage 1 starting points.
- Parents of pupils with SEND are highly complimentary about the good support their children are given during their time in the school. They see the school as a thoroughly inclusive community. On occasion, a small number of pupils with social and emotional difficulties have exhibited challenging behaviour. As a result, the school's record of fixed-term exclusions has been above the national average for two years. However, pupils' needs are now identified and met earlier. As a consequence, the rate of exclusion has recently reduced markedly. Staff provide good pastoral care and this supports the achievement of pupils with social and emotional needs in their classwork. Most pupils who need to catch up in their learning also make good progress. However, some find the key stage 2 expectations in writing too challenging when their need to develop basic skills is not met.
- The behaviour of the pupils across the school is good in both their lessons and play. They take good care of their workbooks and show a pride in their learning. Pupils value the rewards that the school gives them for their good conduct and believe that the sanctions for poor behaviour are fair. The school's behaviour policy includes the use of detention. The numbers of pupils needing this sanction now appears low. However, records of how and when detention has been used are not systematic enough to identify whether it has been effective in supporting good behaviour. Leaders and governors are reviewing the behaviour policy, including the use of detention, as part of the school's priority of continuing to develop pupils' confidence and independence.
- The rate of attendance for last year was above the national average. However, this term leaders have challenged the persistent absence of a group of pupils. In most cases the challenge has been effective. Where it has not, leaders have checked that pupils are safe and used external support to seek parents' assistance in improving their children's attendance. Currently, however, the school's analysis of persistent absence does not clarify the reasons for this absence clearly enough. This limits leaders' and governors' ability to analyse the full effectiveness of their actions.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to improve the teaching of writing so that all pupils, particularly boys and pupils with SEND, make consistently good progress
- parental concerns, persistent absence and the use of sanctions for poor behaviour are systematically logged so that trends and actions can be more clearly analysed.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the director of education for the Diocese of Bath and Wells, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Somerset. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Wendy Marriott
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I visited all classes together with you and the deputy headteacher. I took account of pupils' work seen in lessons and in the sample of English books we reviewed together. I held discussions about the school's work with a range of leaders. I considered a range of documentary evidence, including the school development plan and information about pupils' achievement and attendance. I met with a group of governors and with a representative of the multi-academy trust. I reviewed information about the school's policies and procedures for safeguarding, including the use of exclusion and detention. I met with a group of pupils to learn about their views of the school. I met with parents at the start of the school day and took account of 70 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and 50 additional comments. I also took account of 20 responses to the staff survey.