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Mrs Shirley Arnold
Headteacher
St Andrew's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School
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Dear Mrs Arnold

Short inspection of St Andrew's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 26 April 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 November 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Leaders have ensured that the areas for improvement identified in the last inspection have been addressed. You took up post as headteacher in September 2016. Your prior role as deputy headteacher in the school meant that you had a good understanding of the school's strengths and where it needed to improve. You immediately set about addressing these areas, prioritising all aspects of safeguarding to ensure that these met requirements. Consequently, when the school received an inspection in September 2016, to follow up concerns about pupils' welfare and safety brought to Ofsted's attention, safeguarding was judged to be effective. You have developed and strengthened leadership across the school by appointing a new deputy headteacher, key stage leaders and mathematics and English coordinators. All staff share your aspirations. Those who responded to Ofsted's staff questionnaire wholeheartedly agree that the school is well led and managed, and they said that they enjoy working there and are proud to do so. The school improvement plan is detailed and clearly identifies appropriate areas for further improvement. Your self-evaluation is accurate.

The school is inviting. Classroom environments and corridors promote and celebrate pupils' learning across all curriculum areas. Pupils have spacious outdoor facilities both for play and learning, including a forest school area. They enjoy all aspects of school life and show highly positive attitudes to their learning. Pupils' behaviour was judged to be outstanding at the time of the last inspection and remains impeccable in lessons and around school.

St Andrews is a happy and harmonious school. Its strong ethos and values permeate all aspects of school life. The majority of parents and carers who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, said that they would recommend the school to other parents. One commented, 'It's a loving school, one big happy family.'

Teachers benefit from effective professional development opportunities. Many are involved in personal research, and there is a strong culture of learning, which has a positive impact on the quality of teaching. This, combined with rigorous monitoring by leaders, ensures that teaching remains consistently good, and teachers have high expectations of their pupils. Consequently, the large majority of pupils make good progress across the school. In 2017, the proportions of pupils reaching the standards expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics were above national figures at the end of key stage 1. At the end of key stage 2, they were also above for reading and mathematics and in line with national figures for writing. Outcomes at the end of the early years and in the Year 1 phonics check have risen consistently over a three-year period and are above average.

The curriculum provides many interesting opportunities, which promote learning well. There are developing opportunities to make links across the curriculum through the new topic approach which has been introduced. Pupils benefit from a variety of trips and visitors to school and have the opportunity to attend a broad range of after-school clubs, including sports.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that a culture of safeguarding permeates the work of the school. All statutory requirements and responsibilities with regard to safeguarding are well met. Staff and governor training is up to date. Records, including the single central record of checks on staff suitability to work at the school, are diligently maintained. The bursar, to whom you have delegated this responsibility, takes it very seriously and has set up systems to ensure that she knows what training has been undertaken, by whom and when it is due to be updated. The governing body has sharp systems and procedures in place to monitor all aspects of safeguarding.

Pupils said that they feel safe. The curriculum supports them well in learning how to maintain their own safety. Parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey agree that their children are happy and secure at school. An extensive and detailed online system ensures that any concerns are logged, recorded and followed up meticulously. Additionally, this facilitates links with external agencies to support vulnerable pupils.

Inspection findings

- In order to determine that the school remains good, I identified several lines of enquiry that we agreed at our initial meeting. The first of these was about how well the curriculum and teaching meet the needs of all groups of learners. This was because, in 2017 at the end of key stage 2, there were some gaps between

the attainment of all pupils and that of some groups, including boys and some pupils who were disadvantaged. There were also differences in the attainment of pupils between different subjects.

- You identified that lower outcomes in writing were due to not as many boys reaching the expected standard for their age as girls, and you took swift action to address this. Revised topics and texts have been introduced since the start of the year. These are designed to be more inspirational to all pupils and especially boys. In the work we saw in pupils' books, this is working well across the school.
- The new topics are beginning to provide more and better opportunities for pupils to write in other subjects as well as in English. This is reflected in pupils' work across the school. For example, we saw that pupils in Year 3 were inspired to write questions to a Roman gladiator as part of their learning about the Romans. However, we also noticed that not all pupils spell as well as they should do, and this impacts on the overall quality of their writing. This is a priority that you have included in your improvement plan.
- The next line of enquiry was to consider how well leaders have addressed the areas for improvement identified in the last full inspection. These were about improving progress, providing appropriate challenge for the most able pupils and developing leadership.
- The 2017 published data for the national tests at the end of both key stages for reading, writing and mathematics show that the proportion of pupils who reach and exceed the expected standard for their ages is at least in line with that seen nationally. Progress in reading is particularly strong, and attainment is above average.
- In lessons and in pupils' books, we saw evidence of the higher level of challenge now being provided for all pupils, including the most able, across the school. In mathematics, for example, pupils are encouraged to choose their challenges and staff encourage them to aim high. School tracking information and the work in pupils' books indicate that the above-average standards achieved in the last two years at the end of both key stages are likely to be maintained.
- As we looked at books, we found some inconsistencies. For example, you agreed with me that not all staff consistently implement the school's current assessment policy. Additionally, not all insist on the same high standards for the presentation of work, and a few of the books we looked at were untidy and contained poorly presented work. Most pupils do take pride in their work, especially in English and mathematics. However, in other subjects, work is not always so well presented.
- Since taking up the role of headteacher, you have acted to distribute the leadership of the school. There are now leaders for key stage 1 and key stage 2. There are also new subject leaders, and you are providing appropriate training opportunities to enable them to develop their leadership skills. Overall, the areas for improvement identified in the last full inspection report have been appropriately addressed.
- The safeguarding inspection, which took place in September 2016, identified several additional areas for further improvement. I looked carefully at all aspects of safeguarding systems and procedures in the school. I am satisfied that these

areas for improvement have been fully addressed.

- The final line of enquiry was to look at the capacity of leaders to bring about sustained improvement. You and other leaders, including governors, are involved in regular and varied monitoring activities, which give you an accurate understanding of the quality of teaching and learning. Teachers receive regular feedback, which helps to improve their practice. This helps to ensure that pupils make good progress across the school. Overall, there is good capacity for further and sustained improvement.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- staff consistently implement the existing assessment policy and the stated non-negotiables of presentation in all subjects
- existing plans for improving the accuracy of spelling and boys' writing are fully implemented
- new approaches to develop writing in other areas of the curriculum are built on in order to further improve writing outcomes.

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

Yours sincerely

Joan Beale
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I held discussions with you and your deputy about the key lines of enquiry for this inspection, the school's self-evaluation of its performance, plans for future improvement and information about current pupils' progress and attainment. I met with subject leaders and three governors and spoke to a representative of the local authority on the telephone. Together with you and your deputy, I visited all classrooms to observe teaching, learning and assessment, and looked at the work in pupils' books in a range of subjects.

I met with a group of pupils to talk about their experiences at school and talked more informally with pupils in lessons and at breaktime. I scrutinised safeguarding policies and practice, including systems for safe recruitment of staff. I considered 40 responses from parents to Ofsted's questionnaire, Parent View, and 37 free-text responses. I also spoke to parents in the playground before school. Additionally, I noted responses by pupils and staff to their respective questionnaires.