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Mrs Alison Flynn  
Executive Headteacher  
St John's Meads Church of England Primary School  
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Dear Mrs Flynn

### **Short inspection of St John's Meads Church of England Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 21 June 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 the school was judged to be good in November 2011.

#### **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 high expectations of pupils and staff and aspirations are high. The relatively recent arrival of a new head of school is proving successful and has created further capacity for the school to improve to become outstanding. Communication between leaders at all levels is a strength and the increasing impact middle leaders are having on improving the quality of teaching is clear to see.

Your working partnership with governors continues to develop after a period that has seen a number of changes to the membership of the governing body. Governors are enthusiastic and increasingly effective at holding you and other leaders to account. Collectively, they know the school well and carry out their statutory duties diligently and with confidence. They are mindful of their overarching responsibility to maintain a strategic overview of the leadership and future direction of the school, and work well with the local authority and diocesan board to ensure that the school continues to improve.

Staff at all levels are overwhelmingly supportive of leaders and rightly proud of the school. They enjoy their work and are successful at engaging and motivating pupils in their learning. As a consequence, pupils' attitudes to school are very positive. Pupils told me on a number of occasions that teachers 'make learning fun'. Pupils in one year group told me that the class teacher ensures that they enjoy learning, but that when she wants them to 'crack on' with their work, she is pretty tough.

Pupils enjoy the extra-curricular clubs and activities that staff provide for them, as well as the traditional day-to-day curriculum. Older pupils in particular were very vocal about how much they enjoy 'normal lessons'. Pupils in Year 6 were excited to tell me about their residential visit to the Brecon Beacons to experience outdoor adventurous activities, as they worked on producing a text to persuade people to visit the area. Pupils in Year 4 enjoyed planning a Roman road system outside on the playground, telling me, 'We don't just sit inside, you know.'

Pupils feel safe in school. They told me that the school is a friendly place and that adults care about them and look after them well. They also told me that there is no bullying at the school, but that they know what it is. They also know in particular about online bullying, and what to do if they encounter it.

During my visit, behaviour was very good, especially in classrooms, where pupils were totally engaged with their learning. This included the Reception Year, where the levels of concentration and independent learning I witnessed were very high.

At the time of the last inspection, inspectors recognised the many strengths of the school, including the high quality of leaders' self-evaluation and improvement planning, effective governance, strong progress and attainment of pupils, and outstanding provision for the care, guidance and support of pupils. They also identified a need to ensure that the quality of teaching continued to improve by ensuring that work was always challenging enough and based on the school's accurate assessment information. Leaders have addressed these matters effectively so that:

- teachers consistently provide appropriate levels of challenge during lessons, including deepening and extending pupils' understanding through carefully planned extension activities and through exploiting opportunities to extend learning
- staff are increasingly effective at using a new system of assessment to plan next steps in learning for all pupils.

Since the last inspection, school leaders have continued the important process of self-evaluation in order to identify the most important priorities to improve the school. During my visit, you were able to explain very clearly the strengths as well as the areas that need to be developed. These include ensuring that pupils' progress in mathematics improves to be as strong as that seen in reading and writing. We also agreed that governors would benefit from developing their knowledge of the school's new system for tracking pupils' progress.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

School leaders ensure that the safety of children is a top priority. Policies and systems are robust. The governing body takes its statutory duties seriously and constantly monitors arrangements to keep children safe. Day-to-day procedures are given high importance and staff are vigilant when ensuring that children are safe.

Recent changes to the start of the school day, including dropping pupils off and managing access to the school site, have been welcomed by parents. The introduction of new gates has also improved site security.

Children are taught how to stay safe when using the internet or social media. They know what to do if the fire alarm sounds. During my formal discussion with a group of pupils, they told me they feel the school is a safe place to be. Staff are trained in safeguarding at levels appropriate to their responsibilities. All the parents I talked to during my visit told me they feel their children are safe at school.

## **Inspection findings**

- You lead the school very well. Your partnership with the newly appointed head of school is developing well and is having a positive impact on improving the school further.
- Middle leaders take their responsibilities seriously. You have ensured that their professional development is given a high priority. As a result, the impact they have on the progress pupils make, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds or those who have special educational needs or disability, is good.
- Governors know the school well and offer you good support in making the changes required to improve the school. They are aware that their role is strategic in nature. They are also reflective and keen to improve their own performance in order to move the school forward to become outstanding.
- Self-evaluation is credible and honest. Development planning focuses on the right priorities and is a useful tool for school improvement.
- The new system to track the progress of pupils is developing well. Staff are using it to plan appropriate learning opportunities, as well as to identify gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding. Senior leaders use the system confidently. Governors would benefit from a better understanding of the information it provides.
- Children do well in the early years, making at least good progress from their different starting points. Learning opportunities are matched closely to each child's needs. Because of the good quality of provision, most children are ready for the demands of the Year 1 curriculum by the end of their Reception Year.
- The school's provision for phonics is good and improving. Most pupils reach the expected standard by the time they finish Year 1. All are at the expected standard by the end of Year 2.
- Pupils' achievements in reading and writing are very good. Because pupils make very good progress in these subjects, their attainment at the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2 compares favourably with most schools nationally.
- Pupils' progress in mathematics is not as strong as that seen in reading and writing, although this is now improving due to the impact of actions taken by school leaders. They have ensured that teachers are offering more appropriate levels of challenge, especially for those pupils capable of achieving at higher levels.

- Leaders, including governors, have rightly identified improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils as a high priority. Because of this, pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds do very well, particularly in key stage 2, where their accelerated progress ensures that their achievements in reading, writing and mathematics are better than those of other pupils in the school and nationally.
- Provision for pupils who have special educational needs or disability is good and improving. Their progress is tracked well. The newly appointed special educational needs coordinator is already having a good impact on improving provision, including the introduction of sensory circuits to ease the start of the school day for some pupils.
- Pupils behave well and show good attitudes to learning. When asked about disruptions to their learning, pupils were very clear that this happens rarely and if it does, it isn't 'super-serious'. They also said that the 'headteachers' have 'the right amount of strictness and fun'.
- The involvement of the local authority and diocesan board of education has been 'light touch' due to the strengths in leadership of the school. However, communication and partnerships are strong and leaders and governors are afforded good support and advice when required.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the progress pupils make in mathematics increases to match that seen in reading and writing
- governors develop their knowledge and understanding of the school's new system for tracking pupils' progress further, so that they are better equipped to challenge leaders to improve the school to become outstanding.

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

Yours sincerely

Clive Close  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

I met with you and the head of school, middle leaders, pupils and the vice-chair of the governing body, accompanied by one other governor. I also talked to representatives of the local authority and the diocesan board of education on the telephone. You accompanied me as I visited all classrooms and year groups, talking to pupils about their learning and looking at the quality of their work. I observed

pupils' behaviour in and around the school. I spoke to parents at the beginning of the day and took into account the 49 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I also took into account the 48 free-text' responses submitted by parents and one letter sent to me by a parent. I analysed a wide range of documentation, including information about the progress and achievements of pupils, your own self-evaluation, the school development plan, minutes of governors' meetings and records of visits by the local authority. I also checked the safeguarding policy including records and procedures to keep pupils safe.