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Mrs Linda Baldwin
Headteacher
The St Sebastian's Church of England Primary School
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Dear Mrs Baldwin

Short inspection of The St Sebastian's Church of England Primary School, Great Gonerby

Following my visit to the school on 31 January 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 May 2013.

This school continues to be good.

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

The school's ethos and values of 'positive relationships' and of preparing 'pupils as confident, happy citizens,' are borne out in all aspects of your work. It is clear that you have the highest expectations of staff and pupils. As a result, pupils are very well-behaved, highly motivated, keen to learn and achieve well. Relationships between adults and pupils are warm and respectful, and the most vulnerable families and pupils receive good support from your team of staff.

You work very well with your senior staff and the governors. Together you have maintained the strengths found in the last inspection and identified clearly those aspects which need to be more effective. For example, you know that standards in writing need to improve and you have identified how you plan to do this. You use clear development plans and ask pertinent questions of yourselves as leaders. You focus on the most important priorities. This approach has helped you to move the school forward rapidly.

Parents are overwhelmingly pleased with the school. The vast majority are pleased with the information they receive about their children's education and feel that their children are achieving well.

You, your leadership team and governors are proud of the high standards that the

school achieves in many aspects of its work. However, you are not complacent and constantly look at fresh approaches to teaching and learning, so that standards can continue to improve.

Governors and the local authority provide effective challenge and support. They have a clear understanding of their role, value your leadership and are ambitious for the school to be even better.

At the previous inspection, you were asked to increase the proportion of outstanding teaching and to raise pupils' achievement further. Strong leadership has resulted in standards continuing to rise, particularly for those pupils with the lowest starting points, including those who are disadvantaged. The teaching of phonics is highly effective and has meant that pupils in key stage 1 perform increasingly well when matched to national standards. Pupils in key stage 2 do not make the same progress in writing as they do in reading and this is your current school priority.

You were also asked to improve the quality of leadership and management by ensuring that subject leaders monitor the quality of teaching more closely and enable any outstanding practice to be shared across the school. Improvement is evident since the last inspection as subject leaders have been more involved in looking at pupils' work and in leading staff professional development. You have plans in place to ensure that middle leaders move to coaching other staff so that teaching and learning improves more rapidly, particularly with regard to pupils' writing. You also intend to develop a more effective system to assess pupils' progress in science, and ensure that investigative science is taught well across the school.

Since the last inspection, leaders and governors have also focused appropriately on improving the outside space for children in the early years. Developing children's literacy skills is a high priority, and the new outside space has already had a positive impact in improving boys' writing.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of good quality. There is a strong culture of keeping pupils safe from harm, and your determination to achieve the right outcomes for the most vulnerable families is a reflection of your caring leadership. Timely referrals and active engagement with multi-agency support is documented and followed up carefully. You take every possible action to ensure that pupils' levels of school absence are a central feature of care plans.

All staff spoken to on inspection know what to do if they have concerns and have completed all appropriate training, including a recent update to 'Keeping children safe in education', September 2016. Leaders keep detailed records and track the support for individual pupils carefully.

Pupils spoken to on inspection say that they feel safe in school and that they are taught how to stay safe when going online and when using mobile phones. Parents

report that their children are safe and happy at school. A typical example of parents' comments in a recent school survey was 'I am so proud to be part of your school, especially for the value you give to each individual child and their families.'

Inspection findings

- Leaders and governors have worked hard to address the areas for improvement since the last inspection. As a result of increasingly effective teaching, the school continues to improve and the standards pupils reach are rising. There have been notable improvements in pupils' achievements in phonics and in the progress of disadvantaged pupils. The school's middle leaders are more involved in checking the quality of teaching and learning than during the time of the last inspection, although they acknowledge that there is still more to be done so that learning in some areas improves more rapidly.
- Leaders have clear plans in place to further improve progress and attainment in writing across the school. You have looked closely at how writing is taught and are reviewing your approach so that less effective practice is replaced with more successful approaches. The materials currently being trialled by staff in upper key stage 2 have provided pupils with clear ways to structure their writing and more opportunities to write at length, and in a range of genres. As a consequence, pupils' writing is improving. Leaders and governors track pupils' progress very carefully and put highly personalised plans in place when pupils are falling behind. Support provided for pupils who need extra help is closely matched to pupils' needs. Leaders' checks on teaching and learning are regular and feedback to teachers is thorough. Information provided by the school shows that pupils' progress in writing is improving but it is not yet rapid across the school. As a result, the school is ensuring that pupils are provided with a more consistent approach to the teaching of writing.
- The school knows its pupils very well and as a result, the work for its more vulnerable pupils has been positive over time. The disadvantaged pupils in the school receive additional targeted support. The most able disadvantaged pupils are given work to challenge them further. As a consequence, the vast majority of these pupils are making strong progress and the differences between their achievement and that of other pupils nationally is diminishing steadily. Leaders and governors make sure that good use is made of additional funding available to support learning. The school's work to support its most vulnerable pupils including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has been effective.
- Leaders and governors rightly acknowledge that pupils' progress in science needs to be tracked more closely, so that pupils do not fall behind. Current assessment systems used by the school provide a detailed insight into pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics, but are not as comprehensive in other subjects.
- Assessment of pupils' learning in science is less effective, and as a consequence some pupils have not made the progress of which they are capable. Pupils' progress as seen in their books in key stage 1 is good and pupils are provided with regular opportunities to undertake investigative science. There were fewer

examples of investigative science seen in key stage 2 books during the inspection. As a consequence, pupils are not developing the necessary scientific skills.

- The current attendance figures for all pupils are better than national averages. However, in the past, disadvantaged pupils have had high rates of absence. You know this and have been very effective at working with families and other agencies to bring about improvements. Systems to monitor groups of pupils' attendance are robust and a key reason why your work has been effective.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- staff develop a consistent approach to the teaching of writing which ensures that pupils' progress is consistently rapid across the school
- teachers provide opportunities for all pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils, to write at length, and in a range of genres
- leaders develop an effective system to assess pupils' progress and achievement in science
- pupils across the school are given sufficient, regular opportunities to undertake practical investigative work in science.

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

Yours sincerely

Damien Turrell
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and shared my key lines of enquiry. I also met with the school's senior leaders and members of the governing body. I considered the responses of 67 parents from Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and the school's most recent questionnaire to parents. I accompanied you to several classrooms in the school, spending a short time in each. I looked at samples of pupils' work. I viewed a wide range of documents including leaders' evaluation of the school's current performance and its plans for further improvement, information on how the pupil premium is spent and a number of policy documents, including those for child protection and special educational needs.

I looked at attendance figures and case studies. I examined the school's website to check that it meets requirements on the publication of specified information. I

observed pupils' behaviour in lessons, in assembly and at playtime and I met with groups of them at lunchtime. I also heard pupils read. I met staff and discussed with them their opinions of the school and its leadership.