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Gary Watson
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Dear Mr Watson

Short inspection of St John's Church of England Academy

Following my visit to the school on 24 May 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in January 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You and your leadership team were all appointed after the last inspection and you rapidly identified further aspects of the school's work to improve. You have wasted no time in implementing positive changes to make the school an even better place for pupils and staff. Children in the early years begin school with starting points that are usually typical for their age. Over time, they make good progress and leave St John's having attained well in reading, writing and mathematics.

There is a constant flow of exciting developments at St John's because you and your staff continually reflect on what pupils need to achieve well and enjoy learning. For example, the weekly 'learning forums', held in each class and led by pupils, provide time for reflection about what has supported learning and what could be improved. These discussions result in teachers adapting their plans to meet pupils' needs more effectively. Teachers promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well through a broad and rich curriculum, underpinned by Christian values. Teachers plan learning activities which enthuse and engage pupils. For example, I observed Year 6 pupils eagerly share their marketing strategies to promote a theme park they had designed.

Your strong leadership, clear sense of purpose and high expectations have enabled

the school to continue to improve at pace. You use a wide range of information well, including feedback from pupils and parents, to accurately judge the school's effectiveness. The leadership team and governors know precisely what needs to be done to secure even better outcomes for pupils. Leaders' development plans are thorough and focus on the right priorities. You ensure that there is rigorous follow-up to any agreed actions. As a result, pupils' achievements reflect the good and improving quality of teaching in the school.

Teachers usually plan lessons which build on pupils' prior knowledge and enable them to achieve well. You recognise that there is still more work to be done to ensure that all pupils reach their full potential. Your comment 'We're always striving to become better' is reflective of the school's ethos which is imbued with a sense of encouragement and optimism. The school's motto 'I will shine' permeates all aspects of the school's work, including the gentle encouragement of pupils to 'shine' in everything they do.

Parents are united in their support for the school and an overwhelming majority would recommend it to others without hesitation. One parent described the school as 'family-focused' and this sentiment was echoed by many other parents and pupils. Parents particularly value the wide variety of extra-curricular activities that are offered which contribute well to pupils' personal development. For example, I observed an after-school club of young musicians playing skilfully the theme from Star Wars and accurately following a musical score. Each pupil was valued for their contribution and showed self-motivation to succeed.

At the last inspection, the school was charged with accelerating the progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, and increasing governors' visits so they were able to evaluate more effectively how well leaders were addressing school priorities. Leaders have taken effective action to tackle these issues. Most pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress as a result of carefully matched interventions. Teachers keep parents well informed about their children's progress through termly meetings.

Safeguarding is effective.

You ensure that pupils thrive in a safe and caring environment by keeping safeguarding at the forefront of everyone's mind. All safeguarding arrangements are rigorous and record-keeping is appropriately detailed and of high quality. Staff have a clear understanding about the procedures to follow if they suspect a child is at risk of harm. Staff are knowledgeable about all aspects of safeguarding because they receive regular training. They are vigilant and take action when necessary to prevent pupils from harm. When other agencies are slow to respond, leaders are persistent in their quest to get the support families and their children need.

Pupils say that they feel safe in school and were able to give me several examples of how staff keep them safe. They say that bullying is rare and when it happens, staff are good at resolving it quickly.

Inspection findings

- At the start of my visit, we discussed the key lines of enquiry to be pursued during the day. We agreed to focus on how well teachers plan work that challenges all pupils; the effectiveness of governance; and the behaviour of pupils.
- The proportions of pupils who are assessed at greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 1 are below the national average, and notably so in mathematics. At the end of key stage 2, the proportions of pupils who reach the higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics are broadly average. Leaders have rightly put a spotlight on middle and higher-attaining pupils who have previously not achieved as well. Current pupils are making better gains in learning because, increasingly, teachers are planning work which requires pupils to work at greater depth.
- Teachers often allow pupils to make choices in their learning. For example, pupils can select the level of difficulty of a task through the 'chilli pepper menu challenge'. This helps in matching work correctly to pupils' abilities and enabling them to progress. However, sometimes activities are not sufficiently demanding to stretch the most able pupils. As a result, too few reach the highest standards of attainment.
- Teachers routinely check pupils' skills and knowledge before commencing a unit of work to determine their starting points. However, assessments do not always give pupils the opportunity to demonstrate their full range of skills and knowledge. This means that the higher-ability pupils sometimes spend too long completing work that is too easy before moving onto harder work. This slows their progress.
- Current pupils' work in mathematics shows that leaders' recent focus on developing pupils' mathematical reasoning and problem-solving skills has proved beneficial in raising levels of challenge. Pupils are able to explain their thinking well and use diagrams and mathematical apparatus to help them with their calculations. For example, in a key stage 2 lesson, pupils used fraction boards and drawings effectively as part of a 'chocolate bar sharing' investigation to arrive at the correct solution.
- The teaching of writing is effective. Pupils develop their skills progressively over time, although there are some inconsistencies in spelling. Leaders have already taken action to rectify this issue. Pupils are supported by teachers to edit and improve their work, and this increases rates of progress. Teachers' use of questioning to deepen and extend pupils' learning is particularly effective.
- Pupils' achievement in reading is a strength of the school. Pupils are keen to read and encouraged to do so. Two well-stocked libraries and motivational displays about books inspire pupils to read for pleasure. However, some of the most able pupils have been given books from the school's reading scheme that are too easy.
- Despite a spike in exclusions in 2015, there have been no further exclusions since. Leaders have implemented an effective behaviour management strategy which is closely adhered to by all staff. Behaviour logs show that incidents of

poor behaviour are rare. Pupils are polite and get along well together. In lessons, pupils demonstrate good behaviour, they collaborate well and learn from one another. Pupils have very good attitudes to learning because teachers make work relevant and appealing to their interests. For example, one class used the popular 'fidget spinner' toy as the basis for learning how to construct non-chronological reports. As a result, pupils had a real sense of purpose for writing and did so willingly.

- Governance has significantly improved since the last inspection. Governors show a strong commitment and strive to do their best for the pupils and staff at St John's. They play a strategic role in the life of the school and know it very well. Governors are much better informed about pupils' achievements because they visit the school regularly. They have a clear knowledge of the school's strengths and areas for development, and regularly challenge leaders to improve the school's performance further. Governors' monitoring visits are closely linked to school priorities. They provide insightful and honest feedback to leaders which is valued and helps to move the school forward.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers plan learning tasks that enable pupils, particularly the most able pupils, to deepen their knowledge and achieve at greater depth
- teachers offer the most able readers suitably challenging reading material
- assessments provide pupils with the opportunity to demonstrate their full range of skills, knowledge, and understanding of a topic.

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

Yours sincerely

Tim Hill
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held discussions with you and other senior leaders about the school's progress since the last inspection and current priorities. I met with a group of staff, including a teaching assistant and a lunchtime supervisor, to discuss safeguarding. I held a meeting with a group of governors. We visited lessons in most year groups where we observed learning and talked to pupils about their work. We carried out a scrutiny of pupils' work, focusing on the most able pupils.

I observed and spoke to pupils at breaktime and gathered their views on behaviour and their safety. I observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around school. I held a discussion with a group of key stage 2 pupils and also heard three pupils read aloud. I took into consideration the views of 99 pupils through Ofsted's online pupil survey. I looked at a range of documents, including the school improvement plan, information about pupils' achievement and attendance, and records relating to safeguarding. I also considered 13 responses to the Ofsted staff questionnaire.

The views of parents were considered through the 83 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and several letters that were delivered to school. I also spoke to parents at the end of the school day.