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Mrs Helen Robertson
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Robertson

Short inspection of St Michael's CofE (C) Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 26 September 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 September 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Leaders' effective action means that previous weaknesses have now shown improvement. For example, the number of pupils who completed the phonics screening check (letters and the sounds they represent) is now high.

You have a clear vision for how you would like your school to be. Your drive to ensure that pupils develop a 'can do' attitude is evident in the classrooms. The consistent approach that you call the 'St Michael's way' is helping your pupils to think and work hard. The relationships between staff and pupils is good. This gives pupils confidence, so that if they make a mistake they know they will learn from their errors.

Pupils are happy here and many parents agree. The curriculum is a strength of the school. There is breadth and balance to the subjects taught in class and the extra-curricular opportunities that you have designed engage pupils in purposeful activity. This helps pupils to be excited about their learning. Enrichment activities are appreciated by pupils and parents. The take-up of extra-curricular sport has risen considerably. The extra monies received to fund sport has been effectively used. We agree that leaders need to develop a manageable assessment system to identify attainment and achievement across the non-core subjects.

Records kept by the school show that incidents of poor behaviour are low. Adults provide good support for those who need extra help. The ethos of your school is

strong and this helps pupils to make the right choices. Pupils are involved in thinking about personal qualities that are important to them. This further supports the good attitudes, values and behaviours demonstrated around school.

In the early years foundation stage, leaders have also worked hard to make an inspiring curriculum for children. By using the school grounds, local community and a range of educational trips you have tried to make learning 'real'. Taking the children to a farm where large machinery was available provided an exciting stimulus. These 'real-life' experiences are aiding the children in making good progress. Boys do particularly well and this is helping them to be ready for the move into Year 1.

Since the previous inspection, leaders have developed an agreed core skills list for each year group to teach pupils to write. These are used by both teachers and pupils to assess how well they are meeting the objectives for their year group. These lists are effective and help your pupils to make good progress. However, the lists do not help staff understand what the most able writers need to be able to do, so some pupils do not meet the highest standards.

Leaders know which pupils need to catch up. This is helping teachers to target specific support for individuals. The tracking of the progress that these pupils make is effective. As a result, you know which intervention is the best. More frequent checks on the delivery of catch-up programmes would help evaluate their effectiveness. This would support pupils in making more rapid progress.

Governors commit to improving the school. The time that governors spend working with leaders means that they understand the school. Records of the work of governors show good examples of where leaders are challenged and held to account. Therefore, the school's self-evaluation is accurate. Action plans contain detailed measurable targets. The targets focus on pupils attaining well. A greater focus on the progress of pupils over time would help ensure that more pupils maintain and meet the highest standard.

Safeguarding is effective.

Through a collaboration with a teaching school, the governors have ensured that the training for staff is kept current and fit for purpose. Staff are fully aware of the statutory guidance on how to keep children safe. They have begun to think more carefully about the specific needs of St Michael's and its community. One example is where the school knows that there is a mismatch between the actual behaviours of pupils online compared to the pupils' well-developed knowledge of exactly how to keep themselves safe. As a result, leaders have ensured that online safety forms a focus of every year group's curriculum.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Records are detailed and of high quality. Staff reflection logs are completed following training on essential safeguarding policies. These logs help leaders to target more training and support for those who would benefit from it. Samples of case files show that the school has taken action to keep pupils safe.

However, the actions taken need recording accurately. This will mean that it is clear to see what decisions have been made following on from the history recorded in case files.

Inspection findings

- Leaders' work to improve writing has resulted in a consistent approach to how this subject is taught. Workbooks show many opportunities for pupils to write and the systems that have been designed are leading to good progress.
- Pupils' workbooks also show that staff follow the policies that leaders have put into place. Classroom environments have a consistent approach to using the school's agreed strategies for the teaching of writing. This means that the school's vision for learning is clear and supports pupils' transition from one year group to another.
- The good progress is underpinned by effective assessment. The school's core-skills framework supports the staff in helping pupils reach age-related expectations. You acknowledge that the more complex technical aspects of writing prevent some pupils from attaining the highest standards. The school's way of checking on the pupils who fall behind is effective and results in detailed plans for pupils to address misconceptions or gaps in knowledge. Checks by governors and the information provided to them helps to hold leaders to account for progress.
- The range of catch-up programmes planned by teachers helps those pupils who need to make rapid progress. This is because they are well planned for small groups or individuals. The information about pupils who need more support comes from pupil progress meetings involving teachers and leaders. This ensures that leaders have a good understanding of the attainment and progress across the school.
- The catch-up programmes are evaluated for impact against the school's assessment system. This helps leaders evaluate the spend of extra money received to help pupils catch up. For example, the language used by pupils to help their mathematical problem-solving and reasoning forms a basis for a mathematics catch-up group. You recognise that some pupils need to move up an ability group to ensure that the school's progress is as high as it can be.
- The curriculum in the early years foundation stage is supporting pupils to attain above the national average for the good level of development. Boys do particularly well and their attainment has risen over a number of years.
- The records kept by the school on behaviour incidents show that the school is monitoring this aspect well. Figures are reported to governors and a range of social and emotional support programmes are in place to support vulnerable pupils. The vast majority of the views of parents, staff and the free-text responses to Ofsted's Parent View survey tool support the view that behaviour and safety is good.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning. During our joint scrutiny of pupils' workbooks completed in classrooms across key

stage 2, teachers' subject knowledge contributed to good progress made. For example, Year 5 pupils worked hard to improve vocabulary and had fun with pronunciation of certain words without exceeding the school's boundaries for conduct.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the school's system for helping pupils reach the highest standard in writing is understood and embedded in every year group
- checks on the quality of catch-up programmes leads to the best progress for those who need to make rapid progress
- they continue to develop the school's assessment system so leaders are clear about the attainment and progress of pupils in non-core subjects
- records of the school's actions to safeguard pupils are recorded meticulously.

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

Yours sincerely

Richard Kentish
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, the deputy headteacher and four other senior leaders. I also met with three governors, including the chair of the governing body. I met with a representative of the diocese. I spoke to parents before the start of the school day and considered the 95 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. I looked at free-text comments from parents. I visited, together with you, one class to observe learning and three further classes including a detailed look at pupils' workbooks. I observed pupils' behaviour around school.

I scrutinised information about pupils' progress during this academic year. I considered other documentation, including the school's evaluation of its own performance. I scrutinised the school's safeguarding procedures and checks on staff employed in the school. I checked the school website. I also analysed the range of views expressed by staff through Ofsted's questionnaire about the school and its leadership.