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Mrs Sarah Hanson
Headteacher
St Barnabas CofE Primary School
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Dear Mrs Hanson

Short inspection of St Barnabas CofE Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 5 October 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.

You, other leaders and governors have made sure that strengths noted at the last inspection have been sustained and built upon. Remaining areas of relative weakness are being resolutely tackled.

During this inspection, people used words and phrases such as 'systematic', 'rigorous', 'detailed', 'not a minute is wasted' and 'high expectations of everyone' when they spoke to me about the school's approach to improvement. The inspection findings confirm that these words are an accurate description. It is very clear that everything leaders and staff do is strategically planned and sharply focused on improving outcomes for the pupils. There are considerable strengths in leadership, management and governance. You and your staff are meticulous and organised as you work on enhancing the quality of teaching and learning. Since your appointment in 2015, the pace of change has accelerated. Every member of staff who completed the online survey said that the school's effectiveness is better or a lot better than when it was last inspected.

You, other leaders and governors have an accurate picture of the school's many strengths. You also know exactly where further work is needed. This is because you frequently check on all aspects of the school's work. You take swift action in the light of your findings. You and your staff think deeply about what works best for the pupils. The staff are open to change and to learning from one another. Your plan for improvement covers all areas that are important for the school's future development. It is sharp, strategic and ambitious. The positive impact of action taken so far confirms that there is strong capacity for further improvement.

You and the staff know precisely how well individual pupils are doing. Your 'battle boards' make sure that teachers know exactly where they need to focus their efforts. They show clearly who needs to move on rapidly in their learning and in which subjects, so that they achieve their potential. Team action plans set out what will be done to help them do so. You also pay close attention to helping more vulnerable pupils to gain the confidence that they need to do well in class. Many parents in their written responses mentioned how this had helped their children make progress.

Because of these strengths in leadership at all levels, outcomes for pupils are improving well across all key stages. The outcomes of national tests and assessments for pupils in Year 6 in 2017 are a striking example. The results improved hugely on the previous year. Pupils at St Barnabas did better than the average for pupils both in Worcestershire and across the country.

St Barnabas is a warm and welcoming school. Corridors and classrooms are bright and well organised. Every inch of space is used effectively. Displays reflect the breadth and depth of the curriculum and celebrate pupils' achievements.

Pupils have many chances to contribute to school life. Almost all are able at some point to participate in the school council. They also act as buddies and helpers and are encouraged to take responsibility and look out for others. The pupils who spoke to me said that the school is friendly and that teachers are kind. They especially liked the wide range of clubs and other experiences that extend and enhance the curriculum. Some proudly showed me the many certificates that they have won for sporting events.

The pupils are typically bright and lively, polite and friendly. They come in to school happily in the morning and get on with their work straight away. They behave well in class, in assembly and around the school. Staff, parents and pupils raised no concerns about behaviour or bullying, and all agreed that pupils are kept safe and well looked after.

Parents who spoke to me and those who completed the online questionnaire all said that they believe that St Barnabas is a good school. Parents were pleased with both the progress that their children make and the care and support that they receive. 'My child has thrived since the first day at this school,' said one.

You have successfully dealt with the areas for improvement that inspectors highlighted at the school's last inspection. Middle leaders now play a strong part in spreading good practice and improving pupils' outcomes. Their roles and responsibilities are clearly defined, and they carry them out carefully and in line with the monitoring schedule. They make sure that things do not slip. You have adopted a programme of phonics teaching that is implemented with a high degree of consistency and attention to detail. This has led to improvements not only in pupils' spelling skills but also in their reading and writing.

Since your appointment, you have made sure that the school has focused strongly on promoting good attendance for all pupils. There have been some improvements,

and the school's overall attendance figure is close to the national one. You have successfully reduced the number of pupils who are away from school too often. However, you know that further work is needed to make sure that all groups of pupils attend equally well. Your improvement plan rightly points out the need to further improve attendance rates for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and for those who are disadvantaged.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding at St Barnabas. The leadership team and the governing body have made sure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Records are detailed, well organised and of high quality. Your comprehensive training programme makes sure that staff understand their responsibilities. It emphasises aspects of safeguarding that are highly relevant for the local area. As a result, the staff understand the difficulties that children and families can face and know what to do should they have concerns. You make sure that potentially vulnerable pupils are quickly identified and that timely action is taken to support them, including where referral to the local authority is appropriate.

You and the deputy safeguarding lead are tenacious in making sure that appropriate action is taken to support vulnerable children. You do not hesitate to make a repeat referral should the initial outcome not resolve the problem. Your records show that staff regularly bring concerns to your attention and that appropriate action is taken.

Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe through the broader curriculum and at special events. Workshops for pupils and parents on topics such as e-safety happen regularly. Parents, pupils and staff in their responses to the online questionnaire and those who spoke to me during the inspection raised no concerns about safety or behaviour.

Inspection findings

- The governing body opened Green Lane Pre-School (early years provision that is registered separately with Ofsted) just over a year ago. You have already seen benefits for St Barnabas. The children who joined Reception this year having attended the pre-school were better prepared and further on in their learning and development than had been the case in previous years. Transition arrangements are more manageable, because you now draw children from a much smaller number of pre-school settings. The transition from Green Lane was smooth and children coped well with the change.
- The early years leader is working closely with staff at the pre-school to develop and extend good practice. She is making sure that both the pre-school and Reception classes use the same approaches to teaching phonics, for example, and to assessing children's learning and progress.
- The proportion of children attaining a good level of development at the end of Reception has risen year on year. In 2017, the proportion increased again and the difference between St Barnabas's results and those seen nationally reduced still further. Overall, the children made strong progress from their typically low

starting points, especially in language and communication, physical development and early literacy. You have set challenging targets for the proportion of children expected to reach a good level of development next year. Early indications from current assessments suggest that the target is achievable.

- In all key stages, disadvantaged pupils achieve well. In all the tests and assessments carried out at the end of the academic year in 2017, the outcomes for disadvantaged pupils matched or exceeded those of other pupils. This is because disadvantaged pupils made strong progress. Consequently, the differences between their attainment and that of other pupils were minimal. In all year groups across the school currently, assessments show that disadvantaged pupils are making stronger progress than others. This is because of the close attention that is paid to identifying potential barriers to learning and making sure that pupils' individual needs are catered for through well-targeted teaching and support.
- Pupil premium funding is spent to good effect. The strategic plan sets out a clear and well-argued rationale for the spending. Pupil premium funding is sometimes used innovatively, such as to provide the personal spending grants that are available to parents.
- The proportion of pupils at St Barnabas who have been identified as needing support for their special educational needs and/or disabilities is higher than average. Pupils have a wide range of needs, including with their learning, with speech, language and communication and with medical and physical needs. The coordinator of provision for these pupils knows each child very well. She has information about their current attainment and progress at her fingertips. She takes care to make sure that additional provision meets pupils' needs well. She makes sure that pupils benefit from the skills and expertise of teachers as well as teaching assistants when working in small groups. They also have the chance to work in groups of pupils who have different abilities. Your evaluation is that this helps them to learn from one another.
- Staff in the Reception classes implement a comprehensive programme of interventions designed to give children the basic skills and understanding that they need to be able to make rapid progress in learning. For example, children learn how to pick up and manipulate small objects using a pincer grip. This in turn helps them to learn how to hold a pencil and to use scissors correctly.
- Leaders review the impact of interventions and additional support regularly and evaluate its effectiveness. Changes are made where needed.
- Case studies and the school's assessments show that many pupils who receive support for their special educational needs and/or disabilities make strong progress as a result of the school's provision. The difference in attainment between this group of pupils and others in the school is reducing.
- In the past, you have had to manage some instances of very challenging behaviour, which led to a rise in the number of exclusions in 2015. This has not been repeated. You and the staff are fully committed to making sure that pupils remain in school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the strong emphasis on boosting the attendance of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities continues so that their attendance improves and matches that of others in the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Linda McGill
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you and the two deputy headteachers to discuss the school's self-evaluation and to agree the areas of focus for the inspection. We also talked about current assessment information and information about attendance. I discussed the school's approach to safeguarding with you. I met the early years leader and four members of the governing body. I met 25 pupils at a meeting of the school council.

I visited classrooms briefly to observe the teaching of phonics, the early years and to look at the provision made for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. I looked at some samples of pupils' work. I scrutinised the school's record of recruitment and vetting checks and other documents relating to safeguarding. I looked at the displays in classrooms, corridors and around the school. I examined documents, including the school's plan for improvement, assessment information, and information on the school's website. I met several parents at the start of the day and took account of the 44 responses made by parents on the Parent View website, including free-text comments. I also examined the views of 28 members of staff and 53 pupils who completed online questionnaires.