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Miss Fiona Bennett
Acting Headteacher
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Dear Miss Bennett

Short inspection of St Paul's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 8 November 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 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. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school's work, of how well pupils behave and of leadership. Standards remain high in both key stages, and pupils continue to make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.

At the time of the inspection, you had only been in post as acting headteacher for a matter of weeks. It was clear to me that you have good plans, not just to maintain the high standards of education, but to build on them. One of your key priorities has been to develop the skills of middle leaders. This is already having a strong impact on standards in the early years and the development of writing across the school.

Governors, led by two new chairs, are taking governance to the next stage in its successful journey. They have particularly strong skills in analysing achievement information and are using this to challenge and support school leaders. They have already identified and partly addressed weaknesses in the school's website, which does not meet government requirements. School leaders and governors benefit from the support offered by being a member of a cluster of local schools.

I was struck by pupils' enthusiasm for learning. I could see from pupils' work and from speaking to them that their love of learning stems from the lively curriculum,

which often includes trips and visits. For example, pupils had been on a Jewish walking trip in York. This led to some excellent writing, particularly from boys, on the history of Judaism in the city. In turn, they then explored anti-Semitism in society, which developed their spiritual, social, moral and cultural awareness well.

The previous inspection report asked you to make sure that work for the most able pupils made them think hard for themselves. The most able pupils now benefit from the richness in the curriculum, including extra-curricular groups. For example, the debating society helps pupils formulate original opinions and learn how to argue points maturely.

Pupils behave well in lessons and in the playground. They told me that bullying is very rare and if it were to happen, there is always a caring adult to turn to. Behaviour records indicate that there are very few instances of bullying or bad behaviour. Pupils value the way in which their views are taken into account when they make suggestions through the active student council. As one pupil put it, 'Staff really care and listen to us when we have any suggestion on how to make the school better.'

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. You have made sure that there is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. All staff are clear that keeping pupils safe is everybody's responsibility. Records show that any concerns are quickly identified and prompt actions and referrals are made where necessary.

While your published safeguarding policy is not updated regularly enough, I was satisfied that your procedures and practice are robust. For example, the policy indicates that staff training took place several years ago. I found that, in fact, very regular high-quality training takes place. As a result, staff are very well informed about such issues as female genital mutilation and the prevention of extremism and radicalisation.

The checks you make on staff on appointment are robust. Your record-keeping is efficient, organised and regularly reviewed.

Pupils have a particularly good understanding of how to stay safe online and when using social media. They spoke to me knowledgeably about identity theft and about how an online presence can be safely managed. They also spoke to me in impressive detail about what they have learned in worship assemblies, which covered topics such as drugs and alcohol awareness and sexual exploitation.

Inspection findings

- Firstly, I was keen to find out whether children in the early years, particularly boys, are making better progress than in previous years. In 2017, the proportion of children exceeding the expected standards was well above the national

average in all areas of learning. Boys, in particular, are now making much greater gains in their learning than before. Key to this success has been high-quality use of assessment information, detailed development plans and a deep understanding by your early years staff of how to develop children's literacy and numeracy skills.

- Secondly, I was curious to see why the least able pupils in key stage 2 made less progress than other pupils in 2016 and 2017, particularly in writing. When I did a work scrutiny with you, it was clear that the improvements you have made to the teaching of writing are benefiting these pupils. Consequently, their sentence writing, punctuation and vocabulary are improving quickly. However, you agreed that spelling continues to be a relative weakness for this group of pupils.
- Thirdly, I investigated why pupils' attainment in science in 2017 was below that in reading, writing and mathematics. I found that the quality of teaching in science varies. Where it is strong, pupils use scientific language regularly, have good knowledge of various science topics and use their literacy skills well. However, you agreed that in some classes challenge is low for the middle- and high-ability pupils. Moreover, sometimes there are missed opportunities for pupils to use and apply their good writing skills in science.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils' spelling improves at a faster rate, particularly their spelling of common words
- pupils' attainment in science rises so that it is in line with their high attainment in reading, writing and mathematics
- the school's website and the published safeguarding policy fully meet statutory requirements.

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

Yours sincerely

Robert Jones
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, your senior leadership team and six members, including the two chairs, of the governing body. I spoke to pupils from Year 6 and from other classes as we visited classrooms. You and your early years leader accompanied me to observe teaching and to look through pupils' books to

see the work they had been doing over time.

I considered a range of documentation, including the 66 responses to Parent View, the summary of self-evaluation, the tracking of pupils' progress and documents related to the safeguarding of pupils.