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Mrs Jayne Stackhouse  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Stackhouse

### **Short inspection of St Margaret's CofE Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 19 March 2019, 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 December 2014.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

You have successfully created a nurturing environment for pupils and staff. Pupils enjoy coming to school and this is reflected in their attendance, which has been above national averages for the past three years. Pupils are proud of their school and their achievements. One pupil captured the views of many when they said, 'It is an absolute honour to come to this school.' Parents spoken to during the inspection say that their children are happy at school and that teachers are approachable, should they have any concerns. Staff feel valued and well supported and all of those who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire say that they are proud to work at the school.

Together with senior leaders, you ensure that the school's values of respect, thankfulness, forgiveness, perseverance, responsibility and truthfulness are made meaningful in the life of the school. Pupils' behaviour reflects their strong understanding of these values. They are kind and thoughtful and respect difference. One pupil explained, 'Everyone is friends no matter who you are or what you look like.' Pupils are knowledgeable about different faiths and show compassion for others by raising money for charity. Leaders have developed a link with a school in Uganda, which gives pupils a broader understanding of life outside of the United Kingdom.

Pupils are keen to do well and demonstrate positive learning behaviours. They work hard in lessons and listen attentively to adults and to each other. Pupils relish the many opportunities to take responsibility, for example as members of the worship team, representatives on the school council and play leaders. A recent initiative for pupils to work with pupils in other schools to promote well-being has widened their experiences successfully.

You and other leaders are committed to ensuring that pupils receive a good quality of education. You are reflective about what is working well and what needs further improvement. However, leaders' plans do not prioritise the most important things that need to improve. This means that leaders are trying to address too many areas at once, which dilutes the impact of their work. Academic targets lack precision. Leaders do not consider closely enough pupils' prior attainment or information about specific cohorts when setting targets and evaluating pupils' progress.

Leaders make regular checks on teaching and provide detailed feedback to teachers. However, these checks do not shine a bright enough light on the specific aspects of teaching and learning that need to improve, for example reading in key stage 2. Consequently, the teaching of reading is not improving quickly enough and too many pupils are not making the progress of which they are capable. Similarly, in the early years, checks on teaching have not focused sufficiently on ensuring that all children make strong progress across the different areas of learning. A new leader for English and the early years is in post. She has taken on these roles with energy and drive for improvement. Changes have begun to be made but it is too soon to determine the impact of these.

You have made progress in addressing the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. Handwriting is taught across the school. In key stage 2, most pupils join their handwriting. They are encouraged to write in pen when their handwriting is of a sufficiently high standard. Leaders have recognised the need to improve further the quality of pupils' handwriting in key stage 1 and have recently introduced a handwriting scheme. As a result, pupils form their letters carefully and accurately.

Teachers work regularly together to look at the quality of work in pupils' books and to share ideas about what is working well in their teaching. Teachers who are new to the profession benefit from observing good practice in other schools. However, opportunities for other teachers to observe and learn from best practice within the school and elsewhere are limited.

Governors are keen and want to help leaders to ensure that 'every child gets the best possible education we can give them'. They have a good knowledge of how effectively the pupil premium funding is spent and the impact of the primary sports funding. However, they lack the necessary knowledge to hold leaders to account for school improvement. Governors know that pupils' combined attainment in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2 fell to below the national average in 2018, but they accept too readily that this is because of pupils' starting points. They do not have a secure understanding of pupils' achievement in year

groups other than those at the end of a key stage. Governors do not check that actions identified in improvement plans are having the intended impact on improving teaching and pupils' outcomes. They do not do enough to challenge the information they receive.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders and governors have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Staff receive regular safeguarding training and updates. As a result, they are alert to the signs that might indicate a pupil is at risk of harm. Staff know what action to take should they have a concern about a pupil's safety or welfare.

Pupils say that they feel safe at school and that they can talk to any member of staff if they are worried or upset. Pupils learn how to stay safe. They have a thorough understanding of the different ways that they can keep themselves safe when using the internet and social media, for example not sharing their personal details and not sharing photographs of themselves outside their home or school. Pupils say that, although pupils sometimes fall out with one another, bullying rarely happens. They know that they should report any incidents to an adult and are confident that adults will help. Leaders' records of bullying incidents show that appropriate action is taken to support pupils.

Most of the parents I spoke to said that their children are well looked after at school. Almost all parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, agree.

### **Inspection findings**

- Adults provide a well-organised and stimulating indoor and outdoor learning environment for children in the early years. Activities appeal to children's interests, which means that they enjoy learning and sustain their concentration well. Relationships between adults and children are warm and positive. Children develop strong social skills and play together happily, sharing equipment and taking turns.
- An increasing number of children enter the early years with communication and language skills that are below those typical for their age. Adults develop children's communication and language skills well. They make thorough assessments of children's starting points and provide targeted support for individuals and small groups of children. As a result, these children make good progress in developing the skills they need to listen, respond to instructions and express themselves clearly.
- The local authority has worked with leaders and identified that children need more opportunities to write independently. During the inspection, children were seen writing on clipboards as part of their play. Work in books shows that children are writing more frequently. However, there is limited evidence of children's learning across the wider curriculum. Teachers do not make sufficiently thorough assessments of children's learning in the different areas of learning. Therefore, they are not able to plan activities that meet children's needs closely

enough. Although the proportion of children achieving a good level of development at the end of the Reception Year is consistently in line with the national average, children are capable of achieving more, particularly in writing.

- Since the previous inspection, pupils' progress in reading at the end of key stage 2 has remained average. Middle-attaining pupils' progress has not been as strong as the progress of other pupils in the school. Leaders acknowledge that the teaching of reading in key stage 2 needs to improve. They have rightly identified some of the weaknesses in pupils' reading skills, for example pupils' understanding of vocabulary and their ability to infer meaning from what they read. However, leaders' plans to improve the teaching of reading are too vague. Leaders do not make careful enough checks to ensure that improvement actions are having the intended impact. As a result, leaders' evaluation of the quality of teaching and pupils' progress in reading is overgenerous.
- There is not a consistent approach to the teaching of reading skills in key stage 2. In some classes, pupils do not have enough opportunities to improve their reading. In other classes, texts and reading comprehension activities do not match pupils' abilities closely. As a result, teaching does not build effectively on the reading skills pupils already have, which limits their progress. Leaders had not identified this inconsistency in teaching prior to the inspection.
- Pupils say that they enjoy reading. They can name favourite authors and say that the selection of books available in school appeals to their interests. Pupils read with fluency and accuracy. However, key stage 2 pupils do not read regularly to an adult in school. Leaders do not do enough to encourage pupils to read at home. This means that pupils do not practise and refine their reading skills sufficiently, which hinders their progress.
- The wider curriculum is a strength of the school. Pupils enjoy interesting lessons that develop their knowledge and skills in a broad range of subjects. Teachers carefully sequence learning to deepen pupils' understanding of the topics they study. As a result, pupils in most classes make strong progress in subjects such as history, geography and science. They are able to recall previous learning and talk clearly about this. For example, a Year 4 pupil explained the turtle and wedge formations Roman armies adopted during battle; a Year 6 pupil described the differences between Anderson and Morrison Shelters in the Second World War and another pupil shared that Olympus Mons is the largest mountain in the solar system.
- Pupils are enthusiastic about their learning and say that learning is fun. Pupils' creative skills are developed well and their learning at home is valued. When I arrived at the school, I was greeted by an impressive display of model dinosaurs that Year 1 pupils had made at home. In Year 2, I observed pupils expertly using the 'bleeding technique' to create paintings of flowers. Pupils worked diligently and with great care. They were able to explain other art techniques they had mastered previously, such as the 'layering' technique.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- improvement plans focus on the most important things that need to improve and academic targets reflect pupils' prior attainment accurately
- checks on teaching and pupils' progress concentrate on evaluating whether improvement actions are making the necessary difference to the quality of teaching and learning
- governors have a thorough understanding of how well pupils are achieving and how effective teaching is, and hold leaders to account fully for school improvement
- there is a consistent approach to the teaching of reading across key stage 2 and pupils are supported to make the progress of which they are capable
- adults use their assessments of children's learning in the early years to plan activities that are sufficiently challenging across the different areas of learning and further promote children's progress in writing.

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 Sandwell. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Claire Jones  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with you, the deputy headteacher, the leader for English and early years, the Nursery teacher and five members of the governing body. I met with a representative from the local authority. I observed, with senior leaders, pupils' learning in parts of six lessons. I looked at pupils' work in their English, reading, history/geography and science books with senior leaders. I held a meeting with a group of pupils and talked to pupils in lessons. I also listened to a group of pupils read. I examined school documentation, including information relating to current pupils' progress, the school's raising attainment plans and your evaluation of the school's effectiveness. I also scrutinised a range of safeguarding documents. I spoke to parents at the start of the school day and took into account the 46 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including the 40 free-text responses. I considered the 18 responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire.