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Miss Heidi Otranan
Headteacher
All Saints Church of England Primary School and Nursery
Parsonage Lane
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Hertfordshire
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Dear Miss Otranan

Short inspection of All Saints Church of England Primary School and Nursery, Bishop's Stortford

Following my visit to the school on 12 December 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 May 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

You, as headteacher, lead the school with a calm resolve and a determination to ensure the very best for every pupil. This is a school whose values are firmly rooted in its Christian ethos. Leaders make sure that staff, pupils and families are well supported and treated with kindness and respect. Staff and governors share the same high expectation that every pupil can succeed. Staff and pupils feel pleased and proud to be members of this school community.

Parents I spoke to informally at the start of the day were highly complimentary about the school. Typical comments included, 'This is an amazing school' and 'There is such a family feel and they keep us well informed all the time.' These views were endorsed by the overwhelming majority of the parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and by the very large majority of parents who texted about their perceptions of the school.

Pupils behave extremely well in lessons and around school, showing respect and courtesy to each other as well as to staff and visitors. They are interested in their learning and they take pride in presenting their work carefully in order to meet teachers' expectations. Since the previous inspection, you have improved pupils'

written work, strengthened the quality of feedback teachers provide to pupils, and improved teachers' use of questioning. You have ensured that subject leaders are more influential, playing a stronger role in monitoring pupils' progress and training staff. You have made good use of the support you have received from Herts for Learning, and this has improved the quality of professional development and training that has been provided to staff.

Leaders and governors also recognise that standards in English and mathematics at the end of key stage 2 are broadly average. Rightly, there is a shared ambition to ensure that this improves further, in order that more pupils can do even better. A good deal of work has been undertaken recently to refine approaches to the teaching of mathematics. Leaders are now prioritising further improvements to the teaching of reading, spelling and writing so that pupils can be even more successful.

Leaders ensure that information about standards and progress is carefully analysed. Governors' decisions are based on clear evidence about the school's most important priorities. Governors visit the school regularly, and they have a secure understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Governors offer a good level of challenge to school leaders. They recognise and appreciate the dedication and commitment shown by leaders, and the hard work and enthusiasm of all members of staff. The school's mission statement, 'Nurturing, resilience and achievement for all', was developed from consultations with the school's stakeholders.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose, and records of staff's suitability to work with children are clear and well maintained. You and the governing body ensure that staff are kept up to date with safeguarding legislation. As a result, staff know their duties and understand their role in keeping pupils safe at school. There are thorough and well-understood systems in place for staff to report any concerns, and the designated safeguarding leaders liaise appropriately with a wide range of agencies.

The pupils I spoke to informally around the school, and those who responded formally to Ofsted's pupil survey, told me that they feel safe and happy at school. They consider bullying and bad behaviour to be uncommon and they are confident that staff will listen to them if they have concerns. Parents' views are also positive. The vast majority agreed that pupils are safe and well cared for at school, with many choosing to express how happy and confident their children feel at school.

Inspection findings

- To ascertain whether the school remained good, one of my key lines of enquiry was about the steps leaders and managers have taken to improve the school since the previous inspection. You have worked hard to ensure that significant improvements have been made. Writing results are now much stronger. In 2017, for example, the percentage of pupils whose written work was assessed as being

in line with or above average was much higher than national expectations. When I looked in pupils' books, I was able to confirm that current pupils are also writing to a good standard, especially in their creative work.

- Nevertheless, your own monitoring records confirm that pupils' non-narrative writing – writing that is less personal and more formal in its style – is not as consistently strong. You are currently implementing a new approach to improve the situation, including providing more support for pupils to write well in subjects such as geography and history. We agreed that this work should continue.
- You have also revised your marking policy since the previous inspection. All teachers are consistently implementing your guidance, and pupils told me this helps them to understand what they need to do to improve their own work.
- Teachers' use of questioning had also been a priority, which you have successfully addressed. When I visited classrooms to observe lessons, I saw numerous examples of high-quality questioning which challenged pupils to think hard. Questioning was also skilfully employed to inform teachers quickly when a pupil had not understood something. This process of continual assessment is now a strength of teaching across the school.
- My second line of enquiry was about the level of challenge offered to pupils in English and mathematics. It was clear from looking in pupils' books that, particularly in mathematics, work is well planned so that pupils with different levels of ability are able to make good progress. There is an appropriate balance of arithmetic, reasoning and problem-solving work which equips pupils well for their formal assessments at the end of Year 6. Pupils are able to choose their starting level of challenge in lessons, and they receive subtle guidance from teachers and teaching assistants to help them make sensible choices.
- In a Year 6 lesson, pupils were relishing the challenge of creative writing with a seasonal theme. For example, one group of pupils used rhetorical questions and imperative verbs to explain 'How to catch a Christmas Troll.' This work, typical of the good level of expectation all teachers share, engaged and motivated pupils to work hard and produce good results.
- When we looked in pupils' books, we noticed some inconsistencies in spelling across the curriculum. This is an area you have already started to address. Recently, you introduced new approaches to the teaching of spelling, which include a greater emphasis on pupils learning specific spelling patterns. You are linking this with dictation work to ensure that pupils have more frequent opportunities to apply their spelling in their writing. I asked you to continue to refine this work, particularly as recent results in the national spelling test for Year 6 pupils were lower than expected.
- You are about to change the way reading comprehension is taught across the school. You have been researching a different approach for teaching in guided-reading lessons, as an alternative to the system which teachers currently use. You are aware that outcomes in reading at the end of key stage 2 have been broadly average recently, and you are rightly ambitious that more pupils should do even better. We agreed that you will continue with these plans, and monitor the impact of the changes you introduce.

- My next line of enquiry was about the support you offer to disadvantaged pupils and the impact this has on their progress and attendance. There are a relatively small number of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium, and the support for them is carefully planned and meets their needs well. Leaders and governors invested wisely when they chose to deploy additional teaching support in Year 6 this year. This allows you to focus on accelerating the progress of all pupils, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds. The evidence seen in lessons, and in pupils' books, shows that these vulnerable pupils are making good progress in their core skills of reading, writing and mathematics.
- There is a detailed, fully-costed plan in place, with opportunities for pupils to participate in activities which develop their social and emotional skills where these are identified as barriers to their learning. Attendance is monitored regularly and where a pupil's absence starts to cause concern, leaders rightly intervene quickly.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- recent work to improve the teaching of non-narrative writing is refined, allowing improvements to become embedded in teachers' practice
- more pupils consistently apply their spelling knowledge in their writing across the curriculum, and achieve stronger outcomes in formal assessments
- teachers are trained and supported to introduce your planned changes to the teaching of reading.

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

Yours sincerely

Nicholas Rudman
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you to discuss the school's priorities for development and the impact of actions taken. I also met the leaders who have responsibility for English and mathematics. I met with three governors, including the chair. I met with the Hertfordshire improvement partner. I scrutinised a variety of sources of information including your records of monitoring and evaluation, governing body minutes of meetings, plans and records for the use of additional funding, and the school's

assessment information. I checked the school's safeguarding and child protection procedures, the records of checks leaders make on the suitability of staff to work with children, and information relating to attendance. We undertook joint observations of learning across the school, looked at work in pupils' books and spoke with pupils about their learning during lessons. I analysed information from Parent View, Ofsted's online system for collecting the views of parents, including responses received by free-text. I also analysed responses from staff and pupils giving their views of the school.