

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
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Ms Francesca Brinicombe  
Headteacher  
St David's CofE Primary School  
Dinham Road  
Exeter  
Devon  
EX4 4EE

Dear Ms Brinicombe

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

Following my visit to the school on 5 February 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in October 2012.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You and the other leaders are passionate about providing an inspiring curriculum to develop pupils' love of learning. Curricular themes, such as pirate journeys, cover a broad range of subjects. They engage all pupils in their learning, including in the early years foundation stage. Consequently, boys are beginning to catch up with girls in the amount of progress they make. Teachers' challenging questions motivate pupils to develop enquiry skills and deepen their understanding. The pupils enjoy finding out new knowledge and using their writing and mathematics skills to record what they have learned. They take great pride in the way they present their work.

Parents and carers praise you and the staff for the way in which you care for their children and promote their welfare. They typically comment that this 'small, inner-city school has the feel and attributes of a village school'. They like the fact that their children know everyone in the school. They also value the variety of trips and clubs that enhance their children's learning and help to develop their social and interpersonal skills. Almost all parents who responded to Ofsted's survey would recommend the school to others.

Leadership, especially governance, has been strengthened since the school joined the Ventrus Multi-Academy Trust in April 2016. The trust's directors and chief executive officer support you and the local governing body well. For example, they ensure that all the required policies and procedures are up to date, comprehensive and applied effectively. The trust's leaders monitor the school's performance

regularly. They provide effective challenge and support to help you to meet the identified areas for improvement. The impact is evident in improvements in the teaching and learning of mathematics.

You have tackled the areas for improvement identified in the last inspection effectively. The improvements in mathematics have resulted in most pupils achieving as well in this subject as in reading. A review of the curriculum has led to pupils using their reading, writing and mathematics skills well in all subjects.

Most pupils make strong progress across the school. Attainment is particularly high in key stage 1. It is rising steadily in key stage 2. Your school improvement plan shows that you have accurately identified the need to increase the progress made by the most able pupils. Leaders and teachers are taking appropriate action to enable more of these pupils to achieve the higher standard in their work. However, some pupils who are disadvantaged or who have low prior attainment are not yet achieving as well as they could in key stage 2. Gaps in their knowledge of sentence structure and vocabulary are a barrier to learning. Overall, pupils' progress in writing, while improving, is not as strong as in reading and mathematics.

The positive relationships throughout the school support pupils' good behaviour and help to develop their confidence in learning. You are aware that the persistent absence of a few pupils has a negative impact on their progress and you are taking appropriate action to tackle this issue.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Effective and up-to-date training for all staff enables them to deal with safeguarding issues knowledgeably and confidently. This includes dealing with potential issues of radicalisation and extremism. Staff are vigilant in identifying pupils who may be at risk. Leaders ensure that the pupils receive appropriate support, including from external agencies when necessary. They also work closely with families and support them well in keeping their children safe.

Pupils say they feel safe in school and parents agree. Through the curriculum, pupils develop a good understanding of risks and how to stay safe. They are very knowledgeable about keeping safe when using the internet or social media. Pupils say there is very little bullying in school and that staff quickly address the few incidents that arise.

### **Inspection findings**

- To ascertain that the school remains good, my first line of enquiry was to check how successfully leaders and managers are improving the uneven progress of different year groups and groups of pupils. In particular, my enquiry focused on how well teachers use assessment to improve the progress of boys, disadvantaged pupils and those with low and high prior attainment.

- You, other leaders and teachers have successfully engaged all pupils, including boys, in their learning through using challenging questions. The pupils are highly motivated to find out more about the themes they study. This is helping boys to catch up with the progress being made by the girls. The most able pupils are being challenged to demonstrate greater depth in their learning, particularly in explaining their reasoning in mathematics. However, progress for some pupils who are disadvantaged, or who have low prior attainment, is impeded by their limited knowledge of vocabulary and sentence structure.
- My second line of enquiry was to check how well you are improving pupils' progress and attainment in writing at key stage 2. Pupils are making strong progress when they are challenged to deepen their thinking and extend their verbal responses before engaging in writing tasks. They are not progressing as quickly in lessons where there are no clear expectations of the improvement they need to show in their writing, particularly in the way they structure sentences.
- My third line of enquiry related to the effectiveness of your strategies for addressing the rising trend in absence. You demonstrated how rigorously you apply the attendance policy by, for example, not authorising holidays in term time and following up absences. You make good use of the local authority's education welfare service. Warning notices, served by the education welfare officer, have decreased instances of persistent absence. You work appropriately with parents to help them understand the implications of absence on their children's learning and progress. You are aware that, in some cases, more needs to be done to ensure that parents have a clear understanding of the negative impact of absence.
- My fourth and final line of enquiry was about how well pupils behave in the school. I wanted to know if there were marked improvements for those who have behavioural needs. This was because the proportion of pupils receiving fixed-term exclusions rose to above average last year. You explained that exclusion is a last resort and that no pupils are currently at risk of exclusion. Records show that the pupils in question repeatedly demonstrated unsafe behaviour towards others and staff. You supported the pupils through appropriate behaviour management plans, which included suitable additional support from external agencies. The pupils have since moved to secondary or special schools. Case studies for current pupils with behavioural needs show improvements, such as the pupils being increasingly able to manage their anger. The vast majority of pupils behave well. Parents and pupils report that the school makes sure its pupils are well behaved.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- all pupils, especially disadvantaged pupils, the most able and those with low prior attainment, make consistently strong progress throughout the school, particularly in writing, by:
  - developing pupils' knowledge and use of sentence structure and vocabulary

- making sure that pupils have a clear understanding of the progress they are expected to make from their different starting points
  - sharing the most effective practice in challenging and deepening pupils' thinking and verbal responses
- parents have a clear understanding of the negative impact of absence on their children's learning and progress.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the director of education for the Diocese of Exeter, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Devon. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Sue Frater  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection I met with you, subject leaders, the leaders for the early years and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, and a group of pupils. I also met with the chair of the local governing body and the trust's director of school improvement. I met informally with some parents. I listened to a small group of pupils reading. Together, you and I observed pupils learning in all classes. The curriculum/English leader joined us in examining a sample of pupils' workbooks, alongside information about pupils' progress. I examined a range of documents, including your self-evaluation, improvement plan and documents relating to pupils' progress, behaviour, attendance and safeguarding. I took account of the 28 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and several written responses from parents. There were no responses to the online surveys for staff or pupils.