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Mr Jim Williams
Executive Headteacher
St George's Church of England (VA) Infant and Nursery School
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Dear Mr Williams

Short inspection of St George's Church of England (VA) Infant and Nursery School

Following my visit to the school on 12 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 July 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. St George's Church of England (VA) Infant and Nursery School is a school where pupils feel safe, and where parents and carers believe that their children are safe and happy. Pupils are well cared for as a result of the school's nurturing ethos.

There have been many changes since the last inspection, including your arrival in the school in September 2018. Since the last inspection, pupils' achievements have been variable. However, parents have recognised the positive changes you have already made to ensure that the school continues to be good. Pupils and parents report that very positive behaviour is a strength of the school, and bullying is rare. The overwhelming majority of parents who completed Ofsted's online inspection survey were highly complimentary about all aspects of the school. One parent expressed the views of many with the comment: 'This school values children as individuals. They take time to know them and listen to them.'

Governance has continued to strengthen since the last inspection. Governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and the identified areas for further development. They challenge and support the senior leadership team effectively. Governors visit regularly to carry out a wide range of tasks, including evaluating school systems and safeguarding. The governors attend a range of training to support their roles and responsibilities, including on safeguarding and safer

recruitment.

At the previous inspection, leaders were asked to improve the teaching of writing, in order to raise attainment further. In the 2018 key stage 1 assessment information, pupils' outcomes in writing were weaker than in mathematics and reading. However, I am pleased to report that teaching in this area has improved this year and pupils are doing better.

The lively environment in the Nursery supports children's' early writing well. Teachers adapt their planning to meet the needs of children of all abilities. Children have extensive opportunities to develop the practical skills required to write; for example, children practise forming letters through finger-writing in sand. Children in Reception make strong progress from their starting points and are well prepared for the demands of writing in Year 1. By the end of Year 1, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the phonics screening check is consistently above the national average. This is because pupils receive high-quality phonics sessions which enable pupils to develop their skills in decoding words. Pupils use and apply their knowledge of phonics well in their writing.

Teachers often provide pupils with good models of writing so that their expectations for pupils' work are clear and pupils know what makes a successful piece of writing. Consequently, pupils' workbooks demonstrate that the most able pupils in Year 2 are making accelerated progress in writing, with many already reaching the higher standard. However, leaders know that they need to improve the quality of teaching and support for lower-ability pupils to improve their rates of progress.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. Staff are well trained. They confidently use the school's robust procedures for reporting any concerns they may have that a pupil could be at risk. Governors are closely involved with this element of school work because they are highly committed and passionate about their role.

Pupils say that they trust staff and know what to do to stay safe, including when working online. They enjoy coming to school and have confidence in the staff to look after them. Pupils report that there is very little bullying of any sort in school, but that disputes between children are dealt with effectively by school staff. They say that such behaviour, which they know to be wrong, is not tolerated.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection, we agreed to focus on: how leaders ensure that disadvantaged pupils achieve well; how effectively leaders support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); and the effectiveness of teaching, learning and assessment for the most able pupils in key stage 1.
- In view of the weak outcomes published in the 2018 national assessments for disadvantaged pupils, we agreed that I would evaluate how well current pupils

are achieving. Your work this year has had a positive impact on improvements for the disadvantaged pupils. Teaching assistants provide strong support to pupils, including effective encouragement and well-chosen additional teaching programmes to support pupils' understanding. Consequently, most pupils are making strong progress from their starting points. In the lessons we visited, disadvantaged pupils were engaged and working well towards meeting their writing learning-goals.

- Funding to support disadvantaged pupils is used effectively. The governing body holds leaders to account for their spending of the pupil premium funding and how this funding is used to benefit pupils. However, the school improvement documentation is not sufficiently precise in the identification of actions needed to improve pupils' attainment. Consequently, there are still differences in attainment for some groups of disadvantaged pupils compared to all pupils nationally.
- The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo), has made a good start in ensuring that the needs of pupils with SEND are identified and addressed effectively. The SENCo quickly seeks support from outside agencies to successfully increase confidence of children in need of extra support in specific areas. For example, speech and language support for pupils in the early years has had a positive impact on improving the reading progress for some pupils with SEND.
- Funding for pupils with SEND has been used effectively to improve the pupils' mathematics, reading, and comprehension skills. Many of the current pupils with SEND are making strong progress across these subjects. However, teachers do not take sufficient account of pupils' individual plans when planning lessons and sequences of work to develop pupils' writing. At times, this weakens the progress of a few individuals who are disadvantaged and have SEND.
- The most able pupils are making strong progress in key stage 1. Pupils are provided with further challenges to develop their depth of understanding across the curriculum. In mathematics lessons, teachers set challenging tasks that are well matched to the most able pupils' needs. Teachers' questions promote discussion and require pupils to justify their answers and use sophisticated mathematical language when solving problems and calculations. Pupils are challenged sufficiently in all aspects of mathematics.
- The profile of reading for the most able pupils has been raised by providing a wide range of challenging books and texts to ensure that pupils reach the higher standard at the end of key stage 1. Leaders are aware that they should sustain the continued focus on strengthening pupils' progress in reading, especially for the middle-attaining pupils, in order to support them to reach the high standards of which they are capable.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers' planning takes greater account of pupils' individual plans, in order to help pupils with SEND to make better progress in writing

- school development plans contain precise information about what constitutes successful attainment for disadvantaged pupils, and how, when, and by whom the impact of actions will be measured.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, 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

Susan Costello
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

Together, we visited all classrooms to observe teaching and its impact on learning. We looked at a wide range of pupils' books, across a variety of subjects. I met with you and your governors and with other senior and middle leaders. I also held a discussion with a representative from the local authority. I looked at the school's information about the safeguarding of pupils and examined behaviour, attendance and bullying records. I also checked a range of other documentation, such as your self-evaluation, your school development plan and your assessment information. I held formal discussions with pupils and spoke informally to pupils during lessons. I also heard pupils read. I considered parents' responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I spoke to a number of parents in the playground as they dropped their children off at school.