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Mrs Sandra Smith
Headteacher
St Nicholas Church of England Primary School, Porton
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Dear Mrs Smith

Short inspection of St Nicholas Church of England Primary School, Porton

Following my visit to the school on 30 January 2018, 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 February 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. St Nicholas C of E Primary School is a happy, welcoming school that fosters a love of learning. Pupils are diligent and enthusiastic. Parents typically describe the school as 'an amazing school with great staff that know my child well'. As your self-evaluation states, 'Children love this school and this school loves its children.'

St Nicholas C of E Primary is a thriving school. Pupil numbers are rising. A number of pupils join the school later than in the Reception Year. You and your team have recently implemented thorough assessment procedures when pupils join so that teachers can quickly ascertain what pupils know, can do and understand. This is helping to identify where pupils need additional support to catch up or further challenge so that they can achieve the highest standards.

You lead the school with a relentless ambition on behalf of the pupils. There have been a number of changes in staffing and to governance. Governors have been proactive in taking part in training and are increasingly holding you and your team to account. You have not shied away from difficult decisions and have been unremitting in tackling any underperformance in teaching and leadership. As a result, pupils are effectively supported and challenged to achieve well. In particular, more pupils make good progress to reach the highest standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the time they leave in Year 6 compared with the national average. Most pupils leave the school well prepared for the next stage in their

education. However, you recognise that some pupils with lower starting points are not catching up quickly enough, particularly in mathematics.

You have worked with determination to review the many strengths of the school along with the aspects that require further work. You have developed a staff team that shares your drive to engender a love of learning. An able team of middle and senior leaders, nurtured by you, has supported the drive for further improvement.

You have been effective in remedying weaknesses identified at the previous inspection. The deployment of staff and effective training has ensured that teaching assistants now work effectively to support pupils. You have also secured improvements to the outdoor environment for children in Reception. It is now safe and attractive, and the activities set up allow children to play purposefully as they delight in practising the skills they have learned in class.

Safeguarding is effective.

A strong culture of safeguarding is evident in the school.

You and your leadership team have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and of a high quality. All involved in the school community are committed to keeping pupils safe. For example, governors have taken effective action to improve the security of the school site. You make sure that all necessary checks are made to confirm that those who wish to work with children are suitable. Training for safeguarding and child protection is up to date, enabling staff and governors to discharge fully their duties. Pupils are confident that any concerns they have are followed up.

Pupils enjoy school and attend well. Their overall attendance has improved significantly in the past year to be better than the national average. Your strong emphasis on pupils' personal development encourages their positive behaviour, with respect and courtesy as the norm. Pupils are insistent that there is no bullying in school. They are confident that teachers sort out any problems quickly. Parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, were unanimous in saying that they feel their children are safe and well cared for.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry focused on how leaders support pupils who struggle to read accurately. The teaching of phonics is a strength of the school. In 2017, every child in Year 1 met the expected standard in the phonics screening check. Children are provided with a highly effective start to developing their phonics knowledge in the early years. However, outcomes at key stages 1 and 2 in 2017 show that previously low-attaining pupils did not make the progress they needed to catch up in reading. You are working effectively to remedy this weakness. You have reviewed the reading resources being used in the school to ensure that all genres provide interesting reading material for all readers. In addition, you have ensured that all reading material is aligned to the phonics scheme as well as the national curriculum.

- Teachers make good use of their assessments to ensure that books are well matched to pupils' abilities. In addition, a highly skilled teaching assistant provides bespoke support. Consequently, current pupils are catching up quickly and show enjoyment in reading.
- Next, I looked at the progress of pupils who need to catch up in mathematics. In 2016, attainment in mathematics was identified as a weakness. Although an improved picture in 2017, too few pupils with low prior attainment, particularly in key stage 1, made good progress to achieve the expected standards. You acknowledge that, until now, the drive for improvement has been in reading and writing. You recognise that there is a need to develop teachers' skills in matching work to accelerate the progress of least able mathematicians.
- Finally, I focused on the effectiveness of your expenditure of additional funding. In 2017, the few disadvantaged pupils achieved well to reach expected standards at every key stage. This represented an improvement from 2016. However, you have high aspirations and recognise that too few disadvantaged pupils reached the highest standards. Teachers know the pupils well and match activities to support their needs. In addition, you have implemented a homework club and have negotiated holiday club placements to support vulnerable pupils. Consequently, you are making effective use of the pupil premium funding to support the emotional and academic needs of pupils eligible for the funding.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teaching is effective in accelerating the progress of those who need to catch up so that more reach expected standards in mathematics.

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

Yours sincerely

Tracy Hannon
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I was accompanied by Mike Brady, Her Majesty's Inspector, who was shadowing this inspection. We agreed the timetable and activities for the inspection. I worked extensively with you and your senior leaders observing learning, sampling pupils' work and checking this against the school's assessment and tracking system. I scrutinised safeguarding records and we discussed a wide range of related matters, including staff recruitment, training and vetting arrangements. I spoke with pupils, staff and parents about their understanding of safeguarding. I evaluated evidence

that shows how you work with other agencies to keep children safe. Together, we visited classes to look at the quality of the teaching of phonics in the early years and in key stage 1, and mathematics across the school. I met with three representatives of the governing body and reviewed school documents, including the school's self-evaluation summary and records of governors' visits. I took full account of the 28 responses on Parent View as well as other information, including free-texts received through the inspection, and spoke separately with parents. I spoke with pupils throughout inspection activities and during breaktime, and analysed the results of the nine responses to the staff questionnaire.