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Mr Mark Dakin
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Dakin

Short inspection of St Giles Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 4 December 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 March 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 are supported well by your deputy headteacher and governors, who are determined to achieve the best possible outcomes for every pupil. You have a thorough understanding of the school's strengths, as well as what needs to be improved further.

Since the last inspection there have been some significant changes in teaching and over half of the teaching staff are new to the school. This includes the recruitment of five teachers in September 2018 who are all in their first year of teaching. You and other senior leaders have been highly effective and ensure that new staff are supported well and have provided opportunities for professional and personal development including coaching and working alongside more established staff. As a result, the quality of their teaching is improving.

Governors know the school and community it serves well. They visit regularly, offering effective support and challenge to you and other leaders. They understand their roles and responsibilities and use these to ensure that their work is sharply focused. For example, the governing body has recently carried out a book scrutiny with senior leaders. They correctly identified the focus for this as challenge for the most able pupils. This demonstrates that governors have a clear understanding of the school areas for improvement.

The quality of teaching across the school is variable. In some lessons pupils make strong progress due to teachers having good subject knowledge and a clear understanding of the needs of the pupils and the next steps they need to take in their learning. This was evident in a Year 6 lesson where the teacher wrote an incorrect mathematical problem for a pupil in

their book in order to check on their prior understanding. The pupil had to identify the teacher's mistake and explain where she had gone wrong. After capturing the pupil's explanation the teacher then set another challenge, which moved the pupils' learning on even further. It was evident across pupils' books that this teacher took every opportunity to assess the pupils' understanding and build on their prior knowledge. As a result, the Year 6 pupils were making good progress. However, in some lessons pupils are given work that is too easy, and they have very few opportunities to apply reasoning skills in their mathematical lessons. Most-able pupils are not challenged appropriately and, as a result, they do not make the progress they are capable of achieving.

You teach pupils to analyse text and write in a range of styles. They then apply this knowledge when writing for other purposes and in other subjects. You promote the use of more complex reading material and vocabulary which pupils enjoy exploring. Pupils understood what to do if they came across language they did not understand. They told me they would simply use a dictionary or thesaurus to help them find out what the word meant. Pupils who read for me did so with fluency, confidence and determination. Pupils were eager to tell me about their many opportunities to read and how they enjoyed finding out more about the curriculum areas they were studying. For example, some of the pupils had four books with them. When asked why they had so many, they responded, 'Because we want to find out more about Second World War.'

You have addressed the areas for improvement from the last inspection effectively. Children in the early years now have more opportunities to practise their number and writing skills independently. As a result, children are making improved progress and the large majority achieve a good level of development and are ready to join Year 1 as confident learners.

Safeguarding is effective.

All safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and the leadership team has successfully established a strong safeguarding culture at the school. Underpinning this is the strong spiritual and moral ethos of the school.

You make robust checks when recruiting staff, and all adults are fully vetted to ensure that they are safe to work with children. All staff are highly trained and have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities in protecting pupils from harm, for example on the 'Prevent' duty, so that they know how to recognise and report causes for concern. An electronic system ensures that any information is shared promptly with the leaders responsible for safeguarding matters. Safeguarding policies are appropriate and up to date.

Pupils know how to keep themselves safe and feel safe at school. A programme of assemblies and targeted lessons helps pupils to learn about the importance of staying safe. They have a good understanding of bullying and are confident to report any concerns to adults, secure in the knowledge that such concerns will always be dealt with swiftly.

Leaders ensure that vulnerable pupils and their families are well supported. You and

other leaders carefully track the attendance of the most vulnerable pupils. As a result of this work, these pupils now attend school more regularly.

Inspection findings

- The first line of enquiry was to see how well the most able pupils are achieving in lessons. This is because not enough of these pupils reach higher standards by the end of key stages 2. Evidence in lessons, in pupils' work and in school assessment information demonstrates that there is still more work to be done to ensure that the most able pupils make good progress and achieve higher standards of attainment in reading, writing and mathematics. You are aware of this and are putting relevant actions in place to secure an increased proportion of pupils attaining at the higher standard.
- The teaching of mathematics ensures that pupils are confident in using the essential skills of calculation. However, pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to apply their reasoning and problem-solving skills in mathematics lessons.
- I also wanted to see if leaders were improving the rates of progress for pupils who are supported by pupil premium funding. Together with senior leaders you carry out regular checks and monitor the progress that these pupils make. You use this information to devise strategies aimed at supporting these pupils, through delivering interventions around specific key skills. However, there is more to do. The impact of this monitoring and these interventions are not yet ensuring that enough of these pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. This is further hindered by the inconsistency in the quality of teaching across the school.
- My third line of enquiry focused on exploring the strong progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. This is because you use external support and advice to provide the pupils with a personalised learning plan. You have high expectations and ensure that these pupils receive good-quality support to meet their individual needs. You have trained your own staff to give extra help to the large number of these pupils who have speech and language needs. As a result, pupils' reading, writing and social skills are developing well.
- The early years provides a happy and vibrant learning environment for its children. Adult and child-initiated activities help develop and promote the children's basic reading, writing and mathematical skills. Child-initiated activities are planned and resourced well enough to ensure that children make equally strong progress when they are working independently. As a result, children are making good progress and a higher proportion of them are now reaching a good level of development at the end of Reception.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- there is more consistently good teaching across the school
- across the school, pupils are consistently challenged to use and apply their reasoning and problem-solving skills in mathematics lessons
- lessons challenge the most able pupils so that more pupils can reach the high standards of which they are capable

- more disadvantaged pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.

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

Yours sincerely

Kerry Rochester
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, your deputy headteacher, safeguarding team, your school improvement adviser and a group of governors. I accompanied you and your deputy headteacher to several classrooms in the school, spending a short time in each. I looked at samples of pupils' work. I viewed a large range of documents, including leaders' evaluation of the school's current performance and its school improvement plan. In addition, I scrutinised your information on how the pupil premium is spent, as well as a number of policy documents, including those for safeguarding. I met with a group of pupils, and I also listened to several pupils read. I considered the responses to Ofsted's questionnaires from 31 staff and 34 pupils. The four free-text messages received by parents were also taken into account.