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Mr Richard Restall
Headteacher
St Bartholomew's Church of England Primary School (Aided)
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Dear Mr Restall

Short inspection of St Bartholomew's Church of England Primary School (Aided)

Following my visit to the school on 13 June 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 October 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You, alongside governors, are passionate about the school you serve, and together you are all determined to build a variety of opportunities for pupils, staff and the wider community to engage in. For example, you have all worked together to ensure a welcoming, caring, safe and happy school. You are supported well by your skilful deputy headteacher and other leaders. You all understand the school's strengths well and you are all continually striving to improve those areas that need attention.

You, your deputy headteacher and other leaders keep a close eye on each pupil's performance, from when they start school to when they leave. You have clear systems in place to monitor and track pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. As a result, you can identify underachievement swiftly and intervene so that no pupil falls behind.

Since the previous inspection, you and your deputy headteacher have worked well with other leaders and staff to continually improve the quality of teaching across the school. Carefully planned professional development opportunities for staff have contributed to these improvements. Teaching is characterised by strong and purposeful relationships, well-planned learning and activities that give pupils opportunities to develop their knowledge, understanding and skills. In some

instances, teachers skilfully moved about the room effectively checking pupils' learning, and swiftly tackling any errors or misconceptions they had. Where this was the case, pupils grasped ideas quickly and made stronger rates of progress in their understanding and skills. The curriculum you offer is broad and is a unique contributing factor to pupils' enjoyment of school. For example, all pupils benefit from specialist provision for art, music, religious education (RE) and physical education (PE).

Middle leaders are clear about their roles and their responsibilities in checking the quality of teaching and monitoring pupils' learning and progress. They are enthusiastic and are taking an increasingly leading role in strengthening the quality of teaching across the school and improving outcomes for different groups of pupils.

High expectations and strong relationships permeate St Bartholomew's. The school is a calm, peaceful and purposeful environment. Pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to learning are exemplary. They are polite and respectful to visitors, staff and each other. Pupils are eager to learn, they confidently engage in a wide range of activities and they listen carefully and attentively to teachers' instructions and explanations. As a result, current pupils are making stronger progress and achieving well over time. This is particularly the case in mathematics. Pupils are proud to be part of the school community. They care for each other and take pride in their appearance and the work they complete.

Children in the early years benefit from strong leadership, well-planned learning and established routines. As a result, staff know the children and their needs well, no time is wasted, and no child is left behind in their learning and development. Children flourish in this setting because of interesting activities that engage them and allow them to develop their communication, literacy, numeracy and personal and social development skills and understanding.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding requirements are fit for purpose. Staff and governors are well trained and kept informed so that they fully understand their responsibilities to keep pupils safe. Staff know the pupils very well and, as a result, any issues or concerns are identified and dealt with swiftly and effectively. There are strong links with other agencies. This allows the school and families to receive appropriate help, guidance and support when needed.

Pupils enjoy coming to school, which is reflected in their high levels of attendance. Pupils said that they feel safe when they are in school and there is always a member of staff available for them to talk to if they have any worries or concerns. Pupils are confident that, if they do talk to a member of staff, any issues will be dealt with effectively and quickly. Opportunities built into the curriculum have ensured that pupils have a strong understanding of how to stay safe both inside and outside of school. Parents and carers overwhelmingly agree that their children are safe and happy at the school.

Inspection findings

- An area that I explored during the inspection was how leaders' actions are improving pupils' writing skills in both key stages 1 and 2. Outcomes in writing, in the past, have lagged behind those in reading and mathematics in both key stages. Visits to classrooms, discussions with pupils and work observed in pupils' books would indicate that standards in writing are steadily improving.
- Pupils' technical accuracy and style are improving. Teachers place importance on checking pupils' understanding of the correct use of punctuation and grammar. For example, in Year 2, pupils were systematically encouraged to use their 'polishing pencil' so that identified errors were corrected quickly. This encouraged pupils to be reflective and ensured that they consolidated their understanding and skills so that sentences were constructed with accuracy.
- You and other leaders have placed high importance on ensuring that standards in writing improve across the school. This is represented in your school improvement plan and is at the forefront of leaders' actions. Opportunities for pupils to write in English are wide, frequent and appropriate. There were many examples of pupils writing at length in English for different audiences, purposes and genres. This is leading to current pupils in the school securing skills at an age-appropriate, expected level. However, you and other leaders acknowledge that further work is needed to consolidate and sustain these improvements, particularly through providing pupils with wider opportunities across the curriculum subjects to write at length, and for different purposes.
- An area that I also explored was how effectively teachers are challenging pupils in their learning. This is because, over time, the proportion of pupils achieving the higher standards of attainment at the end of key stages 1 and 2 has been variable, and, in some areas, below the national averages. In particular, too few disadvantaged pupils have achieved the higher standards.
- You and other leaders have improved the quality of teaching. Teaching is now well matched to pupils' needs, and teachers' expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving have been raised. This was evident, for example, in Year 5, where expectations of what pupils can achieve in mathematics are high and the teacher is skilled in questioning and checking pupils' understanding of how to compare fractions. However, opportunities to challenge pupils effectively to achieve the higher standards are still overlooked, especially disadvantaged pupils. You acknowledge that there is still more work to do to address this, and this is, therefore, an important next step.
- Next, I wanted to explore what leaders are doing to sustain and improve outcomes for pupils by the end of Year 1 in the phonics screening check. This is because, over the past two years, pupils' performance in the phonics screening check has been below average.
- Effective staff training has ensured that subject knowledge of phonics is strong and secure. As a result, the teaching of phonics is increasingly meeting the needs of individual pupils. For example, in Year 1, the phonics sessions are planned, taking into account the pupils' starting points and current assessment

information. This provides staff with valuable information so that pupils access bespoke learning in small, targeted groups. This is enabling pupils to develop their confidence and secure their phonic skills at a rate that meets their needs. Current assessment information for Year 1 indicates that a higher proportion of pupils are on track to reach the expected standard in the phonics screening check. Despite this, you acknowledge that pupils' progress needs to be accelerated even further to ensure that the proportion reaching the expected standard is at least in line with the national average.

- For those pupils that have not achieved the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check, you have initiated a variety of bespoke sessions. These pupils in Years 2 and 3 are becoming increasingly confident in their reading skills, and they are also developing their understanding of a wider range of reading materials. Such sessions also ensure that no pupil is left behind and that all pupils have every opportunity to succeed and be competent and fluent readers.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- more opportunities are provided for pupils to write with technical accuracy, in detail and at length in subjects other than English so that standards in writing continue to improve by the end of key stages 1 and 2
- teachers challenge pupils sufficiently so that a greater proportion of pupils achieve the higher standards, particularly disadvantaged pupils
- pupils make accelerated progress in their phonic skills so that the proportion of pupils that reach the expected standard is at least in line with the national average.

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

Yours sincerely

Darren Stewart
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and other leaders, including governors, to evaluate the strengths and areas for development across the school. We also discussed improvements since the previous inspection. Together, we visited all classes in each phase of the school. I reviewed work in pupils' books across a range of year groups and subjects, particularly focusing on pupils' writing. I discussed with you current pupils'

assessment information. I spoke to pupils, both formally and informally, about their learning and experiences of school. I listened to a group of pupils read. I read and scrutinised a wide range of school documentation, including the school self-evaluation document, the school's development plan, attendance information and documents relating to behaviour, safeguarding and child protection.

I took into account the 10 responses to Ofsted's staff survey and the 68 responses to Parent View. I also read and took into account the 66 free-text responses from parents and one letter received during the inspection. I reviewed the Ofsted survey completed by 108 pupils.